

OCCASIONAL SERMONS

UPON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:

The Office and Duty of Bishops.
Error and Ignorance dispelled
by the Appearance of the
Messiah.

The Incarnation of *Christ* Mat-
ter of the highest Joy.

The Inefficacy of external Pro-
fessions.

On the same.

Inequality of Condition advan-
tageous to Society.

Death entailed on Mankind by
the Fall of *Adam*.

The evil Tendency of false
Shame.

Advantages of Contentment.

Benefits of an early virtuous Edu-
cation.

The Doctrine of the Trinity con-
sidered.

The Blessing of implicit Faith
in the Gospel.

Religion the most perfect System
of Morality.

Universal Obligation to Works
of Benevolence.

Public Thanksgiving to God, its
great Excellency and Import-
ance.

Providence of God the sole
Guide of human Affairs.

Pernicious Effects of evil Com-
pany.

Care of the Poor recommended;
especially of Lying-in Women.

A religious Life the Source of
true Pleasure.

Charity illustrated and recom-
mended; from the Life of
Moses.

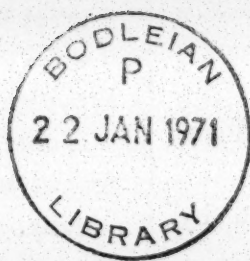
Also : Oratio in Funere, &c.

Written by a late eminent Divine of the
Church of *England*.

D U B L I N :

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M.DCC.LXV.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Discourses, lately found amongst a Number of curious Pamphlets and Manuscripts, were collected by a Person lately deceased, from several Intimates of the Author, at whose earnest Desire he generally favoured them with the Perusal of those Discourses, which had afforded the highest Satisfaction from the Pulpit.

Happy in the Remembrance of the Author's Friendship, the Editor has experienced a Revival of his instructive Conversation in many Passages of these Sermons, which, as they may be justly ranked among the first Class
of

of this Species of Composition, he thought the Suppression of them would be an Injury done to the Republick of Letters, to whom they are a very great Acquisition.

In the Society of which he was a Member, the Author was early distinguished for his unbiaſſed Integrity, ſolid Judgment and fertile Imagination. His Labours in the Inſtruction of the Youth committed to his Charge were efficacious, by Precept and Example exciting them to purſue their Studies to Advantage; and it is difficult to expreſs how much he was admired, reſpected and beloved by his Affociates.

Superior to theſe reſplendent Qualities, he was poſſeſſed of an active
Humanity,

Humanity, to promote *every good Word and Work.*

His Compassion universal, as his Beneficence was extensive; he easily yielded to Solicitation, and devoted a Part of his Time in preaching at some Churches at *Dublin*, as also in *Oxford* and in this City. The Weakness of his Voice was fully compensated by the Energy and *Pathos* of his Addresses, striking at once the Reason and affecting the Passions of his Auditors. Hence his Reputation in the Art of Preaching caused the Churches to become crouded, and it was then unfashionable not to be able to recollect some of the Doctor's persuasive Arguments in Behalf of those truly Christian Institutions, the Charity-Schools of these Kingdoms, on which Occasions he successfully exerted his Powers,

Powers, to the real Ornament of our Language, and to the Advancement of Christian Eloquence.

A Treasure, and as such these Discourses must be esteemed, it would be injurious to bury in Oblivion. The Students in Divinity, in the several Universities of these Kingdoms, are here presented with the most excellent Model for their Imitation; and the well-disposed Reader is furnished with the most cogent Incentives to Piety, Virtue and Benevolence.

London, Oct. 20.

1764.

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SERMON

S E R M O N I.

The Office and Duty of Bishops.

Preached at the Consecration of the Lord
Bishop of Cloyne, at St. Anne's, Dublin;
March 11. 1753.

St. MATTHEW X. 40.

*He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that
receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.*

OUR Blessed Lord, during his stay upon SERM.
I.
earth, takes frequent occasions of fore-
warning his Apostles^a, that he was to be
removed from them, and that they should have
great difficulties to contend with, in publishing to
mankind those terms of salvation, which he came
into the world to establish and make manifest. At
the same time, that they might not be entirely dis-
couraged, and driven into despair, by so melan-
cholly a prospect, he promises to send his Holy
Spirit to their assistance, to enlighten and support
them, and that he would give them, in the end,
a glorious reward. He tells them particularly
that, among other sufferings, they should be despised
and calumniated by men; contempt and calumny
being ever grievous to good and generous
B minds;

2 *The Office and Duty of Bishops.*

SERM. minds ; but to comfort them under this injustice,

I. assures them, that he would consider their cause as
 his own : That as they were to act by a commission from Him, whosoever received them, that is, treated them with regard and honour, should be looked upon as having shown that regard, having done that honour to himself that sent them, and in consequence to the Father, the Almighty Creator of all things, from whom he had come forth.

The words contain this general doctrine : That we are to receive (that is, attend to the instructions, esteem and reverence the persons of) Christ's Ministers ; those who, according to his ordinance, are empowered to preach his Gospel, and administer the Sacraments he hath instituted. But as these words are, in the text, applied by our Lord particularly to the Apostles, I shall, at this time, consider the duty prescribed in them, with regard to those, who are highest and of principal authority in this Ministry, whom, in this respect at least, we may look upon as in the place of, and representing, the Apostles.

The reasonableness and importance of this duty, our obligation to pay respect and obedience to persons of this order in the Church, will appear from considering *the origin and nature of their office, the qualifications necessary to fit a man for the discharge of this office, and the ill consequences which would arise from the general neglect of this duty* ; of each of which I shall treat separately.

First. In the office of Bishops two things are to be distinguished ; that part of their function which they

they have in common with the other Ministers of SERM:
Christ; and that which is peculiar to themselves. I.

Of the first sort, is the power of preaching the Gospel of Christ and administering his Holy Sacraments. Now that this power is of immediate divine institution cannot be, and indeed is not, denied. That certain persons should be set apart for the performance of these offices, upon which they should diligently attend, and the discharge of which should be reserved to them alone, is agreeable to the precept and practice of our Lord and his Apostles, and has been the universal sense of the church in all ages. It is also reasonable and necessary in the nature of the thing; for it is not possible that religion should be preserved in its purity, that men should be rightly instructed in its doctrines, and its necessary rites and positive duties be properly performed, if there were not selected persons, whose peculiar business it should be, to take upon them the care and administration of these things. To this end it was necessary, that there should be lodged somewhere, a power of appointing these persons from time to time, without which the succession of them could not be kept up. Now it is this trust, which makes up a considerable part of what I just now called the peculiar office of Bishops.

That there is, and must be, such a power in the church, reason demonstrates, and all men allow; but it is doubted with whom this power is entrusted; whether with Bishops alone, as in our Church, or whether it does not, of right, belong to the Elders or Presbyters, who, assembling in a conve-

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I.

nient number, may chuse and set apart such persons.

As this controversy hath been already managed, and the point discussed with great accuracy by many learned men, I shall not, at this time, enter far into it; but I think it may not be amiss to make some few observations, which may enable us to judge rightly of it, and which also seem proper to my present design.

In examining into the truth of any contested fact, we should consider what degree of evidence, as circumstances are, might reasonably be expected for this fact; how near the evidence which we have, approaches to this degree; and what contrary testimony is brought. For if we have such, or nearly as great evidence for it, as the thing is well capable of, or if the opposite opinion be more weakly grounded, that fact, by all the rules of right reasoning, we must admit as true; although, perhaps, we may not be able to answer all the difficulties which are raised about it, not having left to us materials sufficient to afford a clear solution of them.

Now it is to be remarked, that concerning the institution of Bishops, we are not to expect any full explicit account in the Holy Scriptures; for during the stay of our Lord upon earth, the form of the Church was not, and could not be settled, as the great proof of religion depended upon his resurrection and ascent into Heaven. In the Gospels, therefore, we are not to look for an explicit account of the point; neither are we to expect it in the *Acts of the Apostles*, which comprehend but the history of

a very few years, and do not extend to the Time in which such settlement might take place; and the Epistles of *St. Paul* and the other Epistles, were written to churches already established, for which reason, there was not any necessity for mentioning particularly the form of their establishment, a point they suppose already well known. Since then an explicit and circumstantial account of the institution of Bishops, as presiding over the other ministers, and conferring Holy Orders, is not to be expected in Scripture; our not being able to assign such account, is plainly no argument, that they were not then appointed. The single question is, supposing them to have been instituted by the Apostles, Is there such an account of them there as may be reasonably expected? I answer, that there is; for we read there of national Churches, of the Church of *Jerusalem*, of *Crete*, of *Ephesus*, of *Philippi*; and we find that *St. James* presided in the first, in the others, *Titus*, *Timothy*, and *Epaphroditus*. Now what were these Churches? They could not be assemblies, who met to worship God in one place in those cities or countries, and so were under the care of one Pastor or Elder, because, at that time, the Christians were scattered and dispersed through the provinces of the Empire, for fear of the governors; neither if they had been very numerous in one place, is it to be supposed that they could assemble in great numbers; so that by these Churches must be meant the Believers in those different countries, taken care of by their several Pastors, but united under one head or Bishop. This is farther confirmed by express passages of *St. Paul's*

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SERM. Epistles. He commands *Titus* to ordain Elders in

I. every city. To *Timothy* he saith, *Rebuke not an Elder, but admonish him as a father*; and he prescribes the degree of evidence, upon which alone he might condemn him. Which expressions manifestly shew a power lodged in one person, superior to that of the Elders or Presbyters, a power of appointing them, of rebuking and censuring them: and he farther commands expressly, to *obey those who have rule over us, and submit ourselves.*

If we add to these passages of Holy Writ, the practice of the Primitive Church, we shall have a very convincing argument to this purpose; for since it hath been proved, that in all the Christian Churches which we have any distinct accounts of, very soon after the time of the Apostles, Bishops exercised these powers, and lists of their names are preserved to us by good authors up to that time; it follows, either that Bishops were instituted by the Apostles, or if not, that they were admitted into the Church soon after: But how is it possible that this latter could be the case? Would those Christians who received their religion immediately from the Apostles, who were so strict, and zealous, and steady in adhering to the institutions delivered to them, depart at once from the order established, and bring in a form of government entirely new? This cannot be supposed; and, what is yet more improbable, could this change, this innovation, be introduced in so short a time, in so many different places, without any resistance, any contention, any footsteps remaining of the least discontent or complaints about it? this is utterly incredible; and therefore

therefore, that Episcopacy is of Apostolick institution, is a fact which hath as full evidence, as, from the nature and circumstances of it, could well be expected; consequently, by the observation premised, ought to be admitted as true. SERM.
I.

Give me leave to add a remark in this place, which I think may be of use. When the question so much and so unhappily agitated of late times, is proposed, Whether Episcopacy be of divine institution? We may, from what has been said, answer it thus: If by divine institution be meant such an express command of Jesus Christ or his Apostles, as we are bound to obey, which we cannot depart from without violating his order, and transgressing against God, in which sense the Holy Sacraments are of divine institution; I answer, that in this sense the order of Bishops is not of divine institution. But if by these words be meant, that the Apostles, who were in general guided by divine inspiration, judged this form of Church-government to be the most convenient, and established it; that it was received from them, and continued in the several Primitive Churches in different parts of the world; in this less proper and strict sense of the expression, it seems clear that it ought to be admitted. But then, the consequence is not what too many have too zealously inferred, that all who reject this form of Church-government are directly disobedient to Christ, and that the powers by which their Ministers act, are null and invalid—but that, where it may conveniently, and consistently with the civil state and good of society, be established, it ought to be preferred; and therefore, where it is

SERM. already established, and interwoven with the civil
 I. constitution, as it is among us, they who dissent
 ~~~~~ from it, act herein wrong and unreasonably.

Warmth in opinion, incident to those of all  
 sides, ought carefully to be avoided, because it does  
 great prejudice to the truth; it makes those who  
 are right often wrong, by over-straining their  
 right; and makes those who are wrong obstinate  
 in their mistake. Our form of Church-govern-  
 ment is conformable to that established by our  
 Lord's Apostles: But we are not therefore to con-  
 demn those who dissent from us so violently, as to  
 assert, that they have no orders, consequently no  
 Sacrament, and therefore no Church; because the  
 validity of a ministerial function, depending, not  
 on a form, ceremony, or intention of the Minister,  
 but on the acceptance of Almighty God; we can-  
 not, without impious presumption, assign condi-  
 tions limiting that acceptance, except where He,  
 in his holy word, has expressly declared that there  
 are such conditions: It is not for us to determine  
 how far he will, or will not, accept a sincere,  
 though imperfect worship. But this we know,  
 that it is our duty to defend and adhere to what is  
 right: This let us do; and at the same time en-  
 deavour to win over those who differ from us, by  
 the rational and charitable methods of persuasion  
 and candour, not widen the breach by harsh cen-  
 sure and unjustifiable condemnation.

Perhaps the abuse of this expression *Divine Insti-  
 tution*, may have contributed to keep up divisions;  
 for men have confounded that which is by Example  
 only, with that which is by positive Precept, and  
 yet



yet they are widely different : Positive Precept, even in an indifferent matter commands unconditional indispensable obedience ; Example recommends it ; that makes it our necessary duty ; this renders it eligible ; transgression of that, is sin ; of this, error.

SERM.

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The sum is ; in the persons who discharge the office now treated of, we distinguish two kinds of power ; one which they have in common with those of the inferior order, that of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, which, as commanded by our Lord, and useful to the best of ends, the preservation of religion and virtue, entitles them to regard and esteem. There is another power peculiar to their office, the care of selecting proper persons for the Ministry, of superintending and governing them, and inflicting censures on the unworthy, which, as being derived to them from the Apostles, and continued through all ages in the Church, gives them a just right to honour and obedience from us.

This duty of honouring and obeying Bishops is likewise grounded upon another foundation ; it is required of us by the laws of the land ; for, as they are made a part of the civil constitution, and invested with temporal authority and privileges, reason and Holy Scripture oblige us to pay that reverence and obedience to them, which the laws enjoin. But how may this be reconciled with that which was advanced before ? It has been shown that this office was conferred by the Apostles, and afterwards by their successors, the privilege of granting it being confined solely to persons of that order.

SERM. order. Is not the present method of appointing  
 I. them by the civil power, a violation of this, which  
 seems to have been an essential rule? And besides,  
 may it not prove the whole order to be unnecessary?  
 For as none can grant a power which he hath not,  
 may not the secular magistrate, who constitutes  
 them, himself perform their office?

In answer to this observe: That the Christian religion being at first different from that of the several states under which it was professed, the professors of it had no temporal power, wherefore the first Bishops conferred upon their successors spiritual or religious powers only, which they alone could be the proper instruments to convey, and alone can be; but when the Christian religion became that of the State, as the support of religion is the true interest of Society, it became requisite that the highest persons in the Ministry, the guardians and preservers of that religion should be invested with temporal privileges and authority, should receive strength from that society, which they contribute to strengthen. From hence it became fit that, to preserve the order and subordination of Society, persons who were to possess civil powers should be appointed by the civil power; and it is this civil authority only, which the supreme magistrate bestows in the nomination of Bishops; the spiritual power being, conformably to the Apostolical institution and practice, conferred only by those of Episcopal rank. This argument points out an easy answer to the second part of the objection: The supreme civil magistrate, who names the persons to be made Bishops, cannot therefore exercise  
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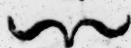
the Episcopal functions, because these depend en- SERM.  
tirely upon their spiritual power ; whereas he con- I.  
fers, properly speaking, only that civil power ~~~~~  
which, for the convenience of society, it is thought  
fit to annex to the other.

But to proceed in the method proposed : Per-  
sons in this high office are farther entitled to honour  
and obedience, by the qualifications required to  
those who are chosen into it.

*First* ; It is required that they should have learn-  
ing and knowledge, as the preservation of the pure  
uncorrupt religion of Jesus Christ is committed  
chiefly to their care, and depends much upon  
them, it is necessary that they should be well ac-  
quainted with the foundation upon which it is  
built, with the Scriptures of the Old and New  
Testament, to which end some skill in Languages,  
in history, and in critical learning is requisite. So  
far likewise as philosophy is useful to the great ends  
of religion, as it furnishes proofs of the existence,  
Attributes, and Providence of God ; so far as from  
a consideration of the relations which we bear to  
Him and to each other, it deduces our several du-  
ties to God and our fellow-creatures ; thus far they  
ought to be well versed in it ; and as of late times  
infidelity has attacked our holy faith with much  
industry and subtilty, extolling the sufficiency and  
perfection of unassisted reason ; it is fit that they  
should be also conversant with the writings of those  
who, before the Christian revelation, seem to have  
carried their moral speculations as far as reason  
could attain ; for abounding, as they do, with  
many

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many noble sentiments, and teaching many sublime truths, they confirm the authority of Holy Writ, which is found in these points conformable to them; and yet failing in many things, and erring in many (for all sects have erred) they gave a glorious testimony to the excellence of that Revelation, which corrects their mistakes, and supplies their deficiencies; and beside the religious truths it has disclosed, delivers a full, faultless system of morals; a very probable argument of its divine original. It is obvious, that to this knowledge they should add that of the several points, in which those who profess the same Christian religion differ from us; those especially, who have corrupted its purity by many false and pernicious doctrines, they should be able to disprove and confute. To all this knowledge, it is farther to be desired, that they should join a plain and manly eloquence, that they should be able to lay the truth before their hearers in a clear and natural light, without which, learning and great abilities lose much of their usefulness in social life. There is likewise some degree of knowledge required from them in their civil and legislative capacities; in both which characters they may be very useful to society: This it may be sufficient just to mention.

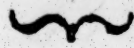
But, *Secondly*; Nothing is more indispensably necessary to such persons, than Integrity; an upright, pious and charitable behaviour; for it is by example chiefly that the bulk of mankind is governed; many cannot well comprehend the force of, or will not attend to, the most convincing arguments;



ments; or if they do understand and approve good precepts, they soon lose sight of them: In general, mankind are pleased to find an excuse for their faults, and glad to catch at any thing which may reconcile them to themselves, in the practice of them. Add to this, that there is a natural propensity to imitation in us all, that we become insensibly and almost irresistibly like to those with whom we converse; and this effect is stronger where the persons we copy after seem to be more worthy of imitation: For these reasons, vice in persons of exalted stations or characters, is more dangerous in its consequences, spreading its contagion more powerfully and more universally: This effect will be most conspicuous, if it hath infected persons of high Ecclesiastical dignity, in whom it might be expected that the good influence of religion should appear with the greatest lustre; for, however justly they may reason, however clearly they may set forth the advantages of a good life, if their practice contradict their discourse, their bad example will overbalance all, and bring more profelytes to vice, than any power of eloquence can make converts to virtue; and though it be a wrong, yet it is a certain consequence, that men, from their ill conduct, will cause conclusions to be drawn to the prejudice of religion itself.

*Thirdly*; Diligence and Impartiality are qualifications required in those who are called to this high office; the first of these is absolutely necessary in the constant charge committed to them, the care of those who are in the ministry of the Church;

SERM. a care manifestly of the greatest importance to the

I.  happiness of mankind ; for not all the devices of the enemies of our religion, not the united arts of sophistry, ridicule and calumny, can so much hurt its cause, as the careless bad lives of its professors, of those especially, who by their office seem obliged to understand it most, and recommend it best. Impartiality, the other qualification mentioned, is necessary in the choice of those whom they admit into the ministry, that due regard be had to their virtue, knowledge and discretion, without any bias from private interest or friendships ; and this is a point of the greatest importance, which cannot be too seriously considered, or too faithfully executed.

Impartiality is in like manner to be observed in the inflicting Ecclesiastical censures ; and in distributing those rewards, with the disposal of which the civil power hath intrusted them, not for the gratification of their own passions or humour, or the advancement of their temporal interests, but for the encouragement of true merit ; which, as they have the best opportunities to discern, so they should be most zealous to recompence.

From this short sketch of the qualifications required in a Bishop, it appears, at first sight, how justly he is entitled to reverence and honour ; for to whose opinion shall we pay deference rather than to his, who, by a habit of thinking and study, hath acquired discernment and knowledge ? Whose advice shall we be determined by, rather than his, who, to a capacity of judging well, adds integrity and sincerity ? And whom shall we rely and depend upon, rather than the man, whom we  
behold



behold diligent in the discharge of his duty, and impartial in the use of his power? Besides, that knowledge and virtue wherever they are, from the very frame of our nature, command esteem and reverence; we do not, we cannot, without offering violence to ourselves, refuse them.

SERM.  
I.  
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And surely this we have described, is a most amiable character; such, wherever he inhabits, is a general good; those of all ranks find their advantage in him: The rich, a prudent friend, a chearful companion, an hospitable neighbour: The middle sort, an humble meek superior, an edifying example, a candid judge: The poor, a kind support, a merciful benefactor; piety, content and charity dwell round about him; esteem and veneration attend his life; praises and blessings follow his grey hairs to the grave; and his virtues live in the memory and hearts of men.—Such persons are indeed great and shining lights, amidst a dark corrupted world. They reflect a lustre not only upon their own order and high office, but upon religion; who is then truly *justified of her children?*

It remains, *lastly*; That we should consider the ill consequences arising from a neglect of this duty. They may be summed up in this: That the want of due honour and respect tends to disable them from answering the ends and uses of their order. This appears first for a reason, which is common to government in general.

Contempt of the governors never fails to produce contempt of the authority. Men may abstract,
and

SERM. and in speculation, distinguish the power from

I. the person entrusted with it; but this will not hold
in practice; the difference is too subtle to be attended to; and they who affect to support the authority of a Magistrate, while they injure his person and character, may discourse plausibly, but will be found in fact to undermine that authority. A strong instance of this we have in our own history, in the account of the worst times which these kingdoms ever saw, when, by this distinction, the regal power was made use of to justify an opposition to the person of the King; the consequence was, the destruction of both; which, indeed, is the natural effect of such a proceeding; for we see, that the man and his station strongly affect each other; a deserving man does honour to his station, and a high station brings respect to the man. The power and its possessor are too intimately united, for us to retain always in our minds the difference between them; and whoever hurts the character of the one, weakens the influence of the other.

The same ill consequence is farther proved by reasons peculiar to Ecclesiastical government. The power of Bishops, and of course their usefulness to the public, depends very much upon the good opinion conceived of them. The civil magistrate, if his person be despised, hath other and strong defences to fortify his authority; he beareth the sword of civil justice, which can overawe and restrain the insolent and contumelious: But spiritual governors are, in a great measure, destitute of this advantage. Persons who have no regard to religion,

gion, despise their Ecclesiastical censures, except SERM.
so far as their property is hurt by them; and this I.
ill effect they often find means to elude or mitigate. ~~~~~
Their being cut off from any spiritual good, secluded from the rites, and deprived of the benefits of religion, will appear a slight evil to those, who openly mock that authority, by which such punishment is inflicted.

Farther; Bishops are exposed, by the execution of their office, to the enmity of evil men; they must instruct, and exhort, and reprove, sometimes with sharpness and severity; and they must always discountenance vice with prudence and discretion. Now men, conscious of their guilt, for the most part, fly out with violence against those who would lay their errors before them, and bring them to a sense of their duty, though with all possible softness and mildness; resolved not to amend, they hate those who, in pointing out their danger, are obliged to show to them their own vileness: Hence they are led into strong prejudices against persons of this order, they are disposed to believe and spread, sometimes to invent calumnies against them. Add to this the offences which, in a corrupted world, must arise against them from the right use of power. Among many competitors, it is necessary to prefer some, and of course to cross the interests and mortify the vanity of the unworthy, who generally resent their being laid aside, in proportion as they deserve it. It is therefore the duty of every good man, by all proper marks of respect and obedience, to preserve the character, and maintain the
C authority

SERM. I. authority against which the wicked and ill-disposed are always so ready to combine, to fully the one, and undermine the other.

Lastly; This is the most probable method of bringing our dissenting brethren to think favourably of our church and the form of its government; for the most zealous among them do not alledge that Episcopacy contradicts any precept in Holy Scripture; and the utmost they pretend to, with regard to the practice of antiquity, is, that it is doubtful in the point; so that the goodness of this form of Church-government will, according to them, stand singly upon the foot of convenience; and where, as now among us, it is established with the concurrence of the civil power, where it is intimately blended, and essentially interwoven with the constitution, certainly this argument concludes strongly in favour of it.

But we may add yet farther strength to the argument: we shall remove prejudices and prevent objections, if we testify by our conduct, that we are well governed under it. If, instead of envying and murmuring, instead of carping at those above us, of finding faults, or aggravating little failings, we behave ourselves humbly and mildly, paying proper reverence to their persons, and honour to their virtues; rather extenuating than amplifying small defects; and submitting ourselves to their judgment with that modesty which becomes every good Christian and every reasonable man.—This conduct will undoubtedly incline all prudent moderate persons, who dissent from us, to think well of

of us and them, and of a government under SERM. which they see things to be so regularly disposed: I.

For although, to determine of the goodness of a constitution, by the happiness which is actually produced under it, be not an unerring way of judging, yet it is often a right one, and it is certainly that by which the bulk of mankind will always judge.

May these considerations sink deep into our hearts! May this spirit prevail among us; a spirit of concord and peace, of candour and meekness, of regularity and mutual forgiveness! May those of all ranks amongst us concur in steadily promoting the same great end, the advancement of our public welfare in church and state; inferiors by ready and chearful obedience; superiors by a just and gentle use of power! That this may be the disposition and conduct of us all, God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord: To whom, &c.

S E R M O N II.

Error and Ignorance dispelled by
the Appearance of the Messiah.

Preached in Trinity - College, *Dublin*;
April 13, 1740.

L U K E i. 78.

*The Day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give
light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow
of death.*

SERM.
II.

W H O E V E R considers, with any degree of attention, the frame of nature around him, the heavens, the earth, the seas, and all things contained in them, must acknowledge that all agree in setting forth the glory of their great Maker. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work.*

But in vain do heaven and earth cry out, in vain does the whole universe join in displaying the Goodness of God, if there be none to hear their voice, (or to speak without a figure) in vain would beings, destitute of reason, afford the most ample matter for glorifying God, if there were not rational creatures, who might take occasion from thence to give the Glory to God. That this is one
great

great end for which man was created none can doubt, who asks himself why he exists? Why he is endowed with reason? Why, among all the visible works of God, he alone can understand the voice of all the rest, proclaiming the glory of their Almighty Creator.

It being thus certain, that man was framed chiefly for religion, it is very improbable, that among the many different religions professed in the world, there should not be one true and pleasing to God; for, in that case, God never could be glorified by his creatures, and must be defeated in the end proposed by him. But if any of them be true, it must undoubtedly be that which is most excellent, most worthy of God, and tending most to his glory.

I propose, therefore, in the following discourse, first to show, that *this Day-spring which hath visited us*, the religion revealed in the Holy Scriptures to us Christians, is, of this kind, the most pure and excellent of any.

And, secondly, to prove that a revelation was necessary, in order to make this religion so universally known as it is at this day, or in the words of the text, *that this light which was given to those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death, was from on high*, derived immediately from God.

First, then, it is to be proved, that the Christian religion is pure, excellent, and tending more than any other to the Glory of God. Now religion consists of two parts; that we should have just notions of God; and worship him aright. In order then to

SERM. make out the point before us, let us consider how
II. far the religion delivered in Holy Scripture, excels
all others in these two particulars.

As to the *first*, that we should have just notions of God. The Scriptures every where describe Him with the greatest sublimity and magnificence ; as a Being, One, Supreme, Independent, Immense, Unchangeable, who always has been, and shall be for ever ; whose Wisdom is unsearchable ; whose Power is unbounded ; who called all things into being by the word of his Power ; who alone is able to preserve and govern all and every thing in this wide-extended universe ; who directs all to their proper ends ; is present to all ; knows all past, present, future ; things open, concealed, visible and invisible ; not only the words and actions of men, but their inmost thoughts ; a Being most perfect, most holy ; who proposeth his holiness to be imitated by his creatures, and has derived from thence a law to mankind, and engraved it in their hearts ; which law He, the great Lawgiver, from his Wisdom and Goodness, and the right of sovereign dominion which he hath over us his creatures, hath enforced obedience to, under the severest penalties, to be inflicted upon the transgressors, in this mortal life, and chiefly in the eternal one to come.

Yet this awful lawgiver and judge is represented to us, in the same book, as a most excellent Being, the Fountain of all Good within and without us, man's chief, nay only Good ; as a Creator tenderly loving his creatures, men especially, on whom he
never

never ceaseth to confer benefits, whom, as a father, he cherisheth in his bosom; to whom, though he neither doth, nor can owe any thing, yet he will not be fought in vain by them; and the good they do, though not adding to his happiness, though due to him, though derived from his grace, he is pleased to reward, and that with a recompence suitable to infinite bounty. Nay God is described to be so good, that he ceaseth not to love and take care of his rebellious subjects, and upon them principally displays the riches of his long-suffering and mercy, that he endures, preserves, pours out many benefits upon them, that he invites them, though unwilling, to return to him, waits for their amendment with great patience, and even pulls them back when flying from him.

And whereas our reason cannot reconcile this Purity of God, this strictness of a just judge, with his goodness and wonderful lenity towards sinners: The Scriptures discover to us the means which Divine Wisdom hath found out to reconcile them, and here opens the great *Mystery of Godliness, God made manifest in the flesh*, and redeeming his church with his own blood.

There is nothing herein repugnant to that notion of God which nature hath implanted in the breast of every man; or rather human reason has never found out, nor could, by imagination, frame to itself a conception more worthy of God, of his majesty and glory. If in any part it exceed the comprehension of reason, that only proves those Scriptures not to be the work of reason alone, especially since we find these things incomprehensible

SERM. by reason to be most fit to confirm and render con-
II. sistent those other, which reason declares to us
~~~~~ concerning God.

Now the worship enjoined in Holy Scripture, which was the second part of religion to be considered, is exactly conformable to this notion of God delivered therein; for it requires that we should worship God not so much by outward rites, as in spirit and truth: and though God in the Old Testament requires the observance of many ceremonies from the people of *Israel*, yet the Scripture often declares those ceremonies to be only the shadows of spiritual things; and besides, as often as occasion offers, the books of that very Old Testament teach, that if obedience of the heart be wanting, these outward observances are not the worship pleasing to God, and that which he requires at the hands of men. Hear God himself speaking on this occasion. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. Learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. O Lord (saith the Psalmist) thou delightest not in burnt offerings; the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O Lord, thou wilt not despise.* Now the worship of the heart, which the Scriptures principally demand from us, and of which all outward worship is only so far significant as it is expressive, consists in those affections which a serious and devout meditation upon the divine excellence, upon our wants and weaknesses, naturally inspires, which  
affections



affections shine forth in the holy writers so strongly as not to be paralleled in any others; and we may say that a perpetual veneration of God's holy name is kept up through their whole writings. The Scripture requires, above all things, that we should not content ourselves with idly contemplating and admiring the Divine Excellency, but that our hearts should be so moved and thoroughly affected by the goodness, wisdom, power, justice, and other perfections of God, that we should revere, fear, and love him above all; that we should put our trust in him, acquiesce in his Providence, rejoice in him, depend constantly upon him, and submit our will and affections absolutely to his will.

This worship of God naturally expresses itself in prayers, in praises and thanksgivings, by which we testify our deep sense of his great perfections, especially of his transcendent Wisdom, and Goodness, and Power; and at the same time acknowledge our perpetual dependence upon Him, that we are nothing, that we possess nothing, that we hope for nothing, but from Him alone. Now this duty of praising and praying to God is nowhere so strongly enjoined as in Holy Scripture; and indeed that book abounds with examples of this sort as well as precepts, with supplications, thanksgivings, praises and hymns which men of God, warmed by a holy zeal, and guided by his spirit, breathed forth upon all occasions.

The same Scriptures place the most important part of this worship in piety of life and perpetual obedience. By this we acknowledge God to be  
our

SERM.

II.

our Lord and Lawgiver ; and shew, at the same time, what kind of Lord we serve ; one *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, who would have us perfect, as he himself is perfect. To this head are reducible all those precepts with which the Scripture abound not only of piety to God, but also of love to our neighbour, of justice, truth, chastity, temperance, those especially, requiring humility, patience, and charity towards men, even enemies, which precepts are no where so often repeated so clear and perfect, as in these writings.

But because it is of no use to inculcate these upon a sinner, who, polluted with vice, dares not appear in the presence of Almighty God ; the Scripture is in no respect more admirable, than in the method it discovers to us, whereby we may appease the offended Deity. This great work is not done by outward ablutions or vain ceremonies; the Scripture demands, that the sinner should feel, from the bottom of his heart, the enormity of his crimes, should be sensible of what he deserves, whom he hath offended, and should therefore humble himself, grieve, bewail, deplore his follies, and then, in this state of penitence and contrition, should fly to the mercy of God his only refuge, which he should propose to obtain, not by his own merit, as being most unworthy, nor by the blood of bulls and goats, but by that which is most dear to God, the blood of his only Son, *in whom he is well pleased* ; and through that he is most fervently to beseech pardon for his sins, but so to beseech, as with a firm purpose to amend his life, to deliver himself wholly up to Him, to live to Him in all things,

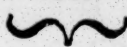


things, to imitate Him who died for his justification; and he is required to prove the sincerity of this resolution through the whole remainder of his life, in serving God faithfully, and showing forth His glory in all his words and actions. SERM. II.

This is the religion, this is the method of glorifying God, which we learn from the Holy Scriptures: And now I appeal to every man's conscience; ask yourselves, If all men, in all ages and places of the earth, had united all their judgments and sagacity, could they have found out a more perfect system of religion than this? Certainly if there be a God, if it be his pleasure that he should be known and worshipped by men, he would be pleased to be known and worshiped in this manner; we cannot conceive any other so worthy of God.

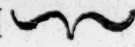
If any one seeks to be farther convinced of the excellence of this religion, let him consider it not in speculation only, the beauty of which is much obscured by presumptuous questions and vain disputes, but in practice, the end and aim of the whole, and where controversies do not enter. Imagine to yourselves a people among whom every person lives, according to the rule laid down in Scripture, worships God as religiously in supplications and praises, loves him as ardently, fears him as devoutly, depends upon him as constantly, confides in him as securely, obeys him as carefully, bears his chastisements as patiently, returns thanks for his mercies as gratefully, governs his appetites and passions as absolutely, loves other men as sincerely, assists them as chearfully, has such compassion for the distressed, such tenderness in bearing

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SERM. ing with the infirmities of others, such readiness in  
 II.  forgiving injuries, is as just, pious, sober, chaste, temperate, sincere, true, patient, meek, humble, continues as stedfastly in the worship of God and sanctity of life, and meets death not only undaunted, but rejoicing: In a word, where every person is such as God their Creator, Preserver, and most affectionate Father, commands them to be; as the Son of God, who redeemed them with his blood, and the hopes of eternal life obtained through him, require them to be: If, I say, there were such a people, how noble a spectacle would they afford to God and man! Here the glory of God would inhabit; and this be the scene of the greatest happiness attainable upon earth. Such is the image of the life proposed to us, and enjoined in Scripture, to which it is to be wished that we could at all come near. But, if we sincerely endeavour and seek the assistance of God to obey this rule, and fail through the infirmity of our nature, the same book points out a remedy to the penitent sinner. *My little children sin not; but if one among you commit sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, 1 John ii. 1, 2.*

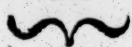
These arguments carry such evidences with them, that the more reasonable part of those who are enemies to Christianity, cannot deny the force of them, but are compelled to acknowledge it to be the best religion that ever appeared in the world, the most worthy of God, the most fitted to perfect human nature, the most capable of rendering mankind happy; but at the same time they alledge, that  
 there



there is no necessity for supposing it to be revealed, SERM.  
because it might have been discovered by the light II.  
of nature. In opposition to which opinion, I   
proposed in the second place to show, that this  
religion was derived from God immediately, *it is*  
*the Day-spring from on high which hath visited us:*

*First*, then, we accept what these objectors, enemies to credulity, allow, that our religion is pure, excellent, and useful to mankind. From whence they must acknowledge, that it is from God in the same manner that all good and perfect gifts are from him: For supposing his Providence, since reason is his gift, the religion which follows from the right use of reason must be his gift also. Thus it is granted on both hands, that the Christian religion is originally from God: The question is, In what manner it is from God? Whether in the ordinary way, by his directing human reason in the discovery of it, or by immediate extraordinary revelation? This latter we believe in common with the Christians of all ages, as we do likewise with the *Jews* concerning their religion: The other is the doctrine of a few unbelievers. But why do they oppose this universal persuasion? Are they concerned lest our credulity should be hurtful to us? It must have a contrary effect, making us adhere more constantly to a religion thus useful to mankind, which we believe to be divine: Or rather, is it not that they may lessen the obligation to live according to the precepts of it? For a religion merely of reason, cannot have so strong an influence

SERM. as that which is supposed to come directly from  
II. God.



*Secondly*; Do not these advocates of reason attribute too much to it? They say that by reason alone they might have found out the whole of religion contained in the Scriptures: This may indeed seem easy to them who are already acquainted with that religion; but would it be so to those who never heard of it? The most curious inventions seem obvious when once communicated, every one fancies he could have found them out, and wonders how they could remain so long undiscovered. If we would estimate rightly the power of reason in discovering religious truths, we should consult, not our reason, as it is enlightened by the word of God, but theirs who have not that assistance. And what monsters reason, thus left to itself, produces, may be learned from the examples of the heathen world, in which, however, were many persons equal in abilities to any modern unbeliever. To comprise all in a word, religion, merely rational, is the religion of the Gentiles of old; the religion of the present unbelievers is the religion of those, who, after they have borrowed from the Holy Scripture what they approve most, boast that they have found out the whole by their own reason, and then magnify reason in opposition to revelation.

But, say they, the principal points delivered in Scripture were known to the Heathens, insomuch that learned men have compiled an entire system of pure religion solely from the writings of the Gentiles.



tiles. To this it is answered, that the Doctrines of our religion relating to the nature of God, our souls, a future state, to repentance and atonement for sins, however useful and necessary, were either not at all, or very faintly, known to the wisest Heathens. But because these men affect an enmity to all mystery, waving this for the present, we answer,

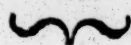
SERM.  
II.

*First* ; That they who compiled these systems, selected the good from a mixture of many errors and absurdities ; and it is not extraordinary, that doctrines, thus chosen out and carefully digested, should make up a tolerable system of religion. But to state the case fairly ; Suppose, on the other hand, that they had collected, with the same care, all the falsehoods only contained in the writings of these Gentiles : If this had been done, what an heap of monstrous doctrines would they have published to the world ! So that if the religion taught in Scripture had no other excellence, but that it alone contains all the good doctrines which can be gathered out of all other writings of all ages and nations ; that it contains them pure and unmixed with evil, and delivers them not obscurely, doubtfully, and faintly, but clearly, firmly, and with authority : This single consideration would go very far towards proving the divine original of that religion, and of the book in which it is found.

*Secondly* ; We should judge of the religion of the Gentiles not from the writings of some philosophers, distinguished by uncommon abilities, but from

SERM.

II.



from their public rites, which were so absurd, that they were, and must have been, displeasing to the wiser men among them; and yet these very wiser men had nothing to substitute in their stead, but doubting, unresolved and fluctuating, continued to join in the worship they disapproved. If we would make the parallel just, let us compare the public rites of Christians with the public rites of Gentiles, the common people of one sort with the common people of the other, the wise with the wise: When this comparison hath been made, what shall we say of that book, which alone is the cause that so many thousand persons at present have clearer and worthier notions of God and his worship, than the wisest of the Gentile philosophers had? Must we not acknowledge this to be a strong argument of its divine original?

But, *Thirdly*; What if most of the Gentile doctrines concerning God and divine affairs were discovered, not by reason, but by a tradition, the first fountain of which was this revelation contained in the Scriptures of the Old Testament?

The *Greeks* themselves acknowledge that they derived all their learning from the *Egyptians* and *Phœnicians*, who had early and intimate commerce with the *Jews*: And learned men have collected a great number of passages in the writings of ancient Pagans, which bear the most probable (I might say certain) marks of having been copied from the *Jewish* revelation. From whence we may reasonably conclude, that whatever right sentiments concerning God prevailed among the Gentiles, were,  
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for the most part derived to them through this SERM.  
II.  
channel of tradition. These things being rightly considered, if we should suppose that there never were in the world Patriarchs, Prophets, or Apostles, never any person sent from God, nor religion inspired by him, what must have been the present condition of mankind? What knowledge should we have had concerning God and his worship? What should have been the habitation of his glory among men? What religion should now have existed of all those which are, or have been, not only of Jews and Christians, but even of most of the Gentiles, of whom there were very few who had not some glimmering ray of revelation to direct them? What would have been the institutions of the people at this day, their manners, policies, and laws, which derive their perfection and authority in a great measure from the holy Scriptures? What would we have been? What these very unbelievers with their religion purely rational? Perhaps they would have had the same notions of God as the inhabitants of the new world were found to have when the *Europeans* first came among them. Strange! We owe the culture of our reason chiefly to the Christian religion, and yet there are found who abuse the subtilty of this reason, to diminish the authority of that religion, which, once taken away, there is cause to fear that we should fall back into the barbarity from which it hath set us free.

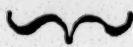
*Lastly*; I would ask of these advocates for a religion merely rational, Did the *Hebrew* nation alone produce reasonable men? Did they excel

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all

SERM. all others in the use, and alone study the improvement of reason? Is not the contrary true? Were not the *Hebrews* excelled in all things which require extraordinary force of reason by the *Egyptians*, the *Greeks* and *Romans*? From these we received arts, sciences, eloquence, and almost all useful inventions. Whence then came it to pass that those abilities, so conspicuous in every other thing, failed of producing useful discoveries in religion alone? Whence is it that the only religion of former times, pure and agreeable to reason, was derived to us from the land of the *Hebrews*, where none of those arts flourished by which reason is cultivated and improved? Whence was it that the *Hebrews* were as much wiser in religion than all other people, as they were more ignorant in other points? Why were the others ignorant scarcely of any thing but the true God and his worship? And why did these know scarcely any thing but this, of which the others were ignorant? Why, in fine, do mechanicks, labourers, persons quite unlettered in these days, speak and think more properly of divine things, than philosophers of old did, men who separated themselves from the world to consider those points? Let us acknowledge something more than human in this; that the religion which hath produced these effects is not the discovery of reason; that the cause of this wonderful and otherwise unaccountable difference is that which is assigned in Scripture; that it is the *Day-spring from on high* hath visited us, *who sat in darkness and the shadow of death*; that it is God who hath made known his ways unto Moses, and his actions unto the children of Israel; who hath shewed  
his



his words to Jacob, and his statutes and laws to Israel; SERM.  
who hath not dealt so with any other nation, and there- II.  
fore they have not known the commandments of God. 

There are some who dislike the stile and manner of the Holy Scripture, and object against it for being simple and unadorned; but these men know not what they ought to approve. This very simplicity shews how rude and unlearned those persons were who first delivered it, and consequently how unfit they were to invent what the greatest and most learned men could not arrive to; they, who could not attain to those ornaments which even the middle and ordinary sort are able to acquire. This is a new and very strong argument to confirm us in acknowledging the divine truth of these oracles, when we consider what, from whom, in how unadorned a form we received them. Let us therefore impress deeply upon our minds the veneration due to these holy laws: Let us adore the Divine Providence who hath omitted none of those things which may tend to convince us and establish our belief; and let us cry out with our blessed Saviour, *We glorify thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and knowing, and hast revealed them to babes and sucklings; for thus, O Father, it seemed good unto thee.*

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## S E R M O N    I I I .

The Incarnation of *Christ* Matter of  
the highest Joy.

Preached at St. *Andrew's* Church, *Dublin* ;  
*December 25, 1744.*

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S T. L U K E ii. 20.

*Fear not ; for behold I bring you good tidings of great  
joy, which shall be to all people.*

SERM.  
III.

**N**O error has done greater prejudice to the Christian religion, nor contributed more to render men averſe from it, than that which repreſents it as a melancholy inſtitution, forbidding every agreeable paſſion, and filling the mind with dark and diſmal ideas ; whereas, rightly underſtood, it hath a quite oppoſite tendency ; ſubduing, not rooting out, paſſion ; it compoſes, not ſaddens, the mind ; it reſtrains only light and inordinate mirth ; purifies, not forbids, pleaſure ; it naturally inſpires chearfulneſs, and is a fountain in the breaſt, ſpringing up with perpetual joy. That part of it which relates to our redemption and the incarnation of our Lord, hath a peculiar tendency to produce this effect, from  
the



the greatness of the benefits we receive in that dis-  
pensation ; and in this light it is that the angel re-  
presents the birth of Jesus Christ, in the text, as  
*tidings of great joy.*

SERM.

III.

The present high festival calls upon us to commemorate more particularly this wonderful event ; and can we better commemorate, than by considering it in this most amiable light, by shewing how fully it answers this representation ?

As a fit preparation for the right performance hereof, let us observe in general, that joy and gladness are the proper dispositions of mind with which we should receive and acknowledge the signal favours that God hath bestowed upon us : We learn from the words of the divine messenger, in the text, that this is agreeable to Him, and it is certainly most reasonable in itself : For as every good and humane mind is pleased with making others happy, is delighted with the perception of their happiness, and their expressions of it ; so we must conclude, that a heart, thoroughly pierced with a sense of benefits received, and overflowing with love and gratitude, is an acceptable offering to God, the best and most bountiful of all beings. Agreeably to this, we find that it hath been a very ancient institution of the church, to lay apart and distinguish certain seasons wherein we should, in a more especial manner, recal to our memory the extraordinary mercies and benefits granted to us, to the end that, abstracting ourselves from the business and diversions about us, we might meditate more fixedly upon them, so that having our hearts fully possessed with a sense of them, we may

SERM. be led from the goodness of the gift, to adore the

III. great Giver, and be filled with a fervent zeal to obtain his favours. This is the natural effect of sincere praise and thanksgiving, and such festivals, properly observed, tend manifestly to confirm us in virtue.—But to proceed to the point proposed; the occasion of the words of the text is this: Some shepherds who were in the field keeping watch over their flock by night, on a sudden beheld an angel, *and the glory of the Lord shining round about them, and they were sore afraid.* The angel who had descended from heaven, in order to publish an account of our Saviour's birth, encourages them, and engages their attention in these words: *Fear not—* be not astonished at this sudden appearance, which being out of the course of nature, and very different from every thing upon earth, may, at first view, fill you with terror, but its intention is opposite; for, *I bring you good tidings*—the account which I bring is one of public joy, of joy, not as the case is usually in news of public joy, confined to, or chiefly affecting, the governors of the earth, the rich and powerful, but such as extends itself equally to the mean and low, to *you*, whose condition of life makes labour and watching necessary. *Tidings also of great joy, which shall be to all people;* the happiness which I now give notice of shall not be, as hitherto blessings, communicated from heaven by the ministry of angels, have been, confined to the people of *Israel*, but universal in its influence, comprehending all mankind, all who have lived, or shall live to the end of the world.

Such



Such was the occasion, such the meaning of the angel's speech in the text. Let us now go on to examine how well adapted it was to the occasion, how just and true ;—in what particulars did the birth of Jesus Christ deserve the praise here given to it, that of *Tidings of great joy to all people.*

And *first*, it deserved this title for the great and happy change introduced into the world by his appearance. Mankind had for many ages lain buried in ignorance and vice ; they were so entirely unacquainted with God and his attributes, the foundation of all religion, that they publickly paid divine honours to the host of heaven, to dead men, to plants and animals. By these means they fell, not only into all the ridiculous rites of a blind superstition, but also into deification of frail, oftentimes wicked, men ; they consecrated their vices likewise, and became, of course, imitators of that corruption which they ascribed to their Gods. Their notions of a state after death were so faint and confused, that they were not in general seriously believed ; or, at least, were so corrupted and mingled with absurd fictions, that they had no material influence upon their lives. Morality was neither much known nor cultivated, as not only private persons lived in contradiction to its precepts, but whole nations, even the politest and most knowing, publickly allowed actions contrary to the law of nature, and of destructive tendency. Some indeed there were, men of elevated minds and great abilities, who saw into the errors of the rest, who have left behind them

SERM. many noble sentiments concerning the Deity, the  
 III. dignity of human nature, and the excellency of  
 virtue; but the number of these extraordinary  
 persons was very small, and soon oppressed by the  
 great deluge of vice, that bore down every  
 thing before it. Besides, even the best of them  
 erred in many points, and spoke with diffidence  
 and doubt concerning the most important. One  
 of their most celebrated sects for learning and  
 numbers denied the Providence of God, affirming  
 that the world was made and governed by chance:  
 Another held, that all things were administered  
 by a blind unchangeable fatality: Many sects as-  
 serted the mortality of the soul; and some left us  
 to the misery of perpetual doubt, affirming that  
 we could not know or be assured of any truth.  
 If the wise and thinking men among them fell  
 into this strange confusion, these doubts and ab-  
 surdities, how deplorable must the ignorance have  
 been! how monstrous the opinions of the com-  
 mon sort, who had not the same leisure to ex-  
 amine, nor the same abilities and opportunities  
 to discover, the truth.

St. Paul's description of the practice of the ido-  
 latrous heathen world is expressed in very strong  
 terms: *God (saith he) gave them over to a reprobate  
 mind, being filled with all unrighteousness, malicious-  
 ness, full of envy, murder, malignity, without under-  
 standing, without natural affection, haters of God,  
 implacable, unmerciful.*

In the midst of this corruption, Jesus Christ  
 published to the world a pure and holy religion,  
 teaching us to worship one Almighty God,  
 transcendant



transcendant in Goodness and Mercy, as in Power SERM.  
and Wisdom, who created and supports, who sees III.  
and feels all things; He assured us of a future  
state, and the immortality of our souls, an end-  
less existence in happiness or misery, according to  
our deserts here: He not only forbids evil actions,  
but corrupt thoughts also; and makes charity,  
mutual love, and forgiveness of injuries, the fun-  
damental principle of his doctrine, and the dis-  
tinguishing mark of his disciples. How great,  
how happy is this change! The truths of religion,  
the attributes of the Deity, the nature of our  
souls, and a life hereafter, are now laid before us  
with such evidence, that the ordinary and un-  
learned among us, may know more concerning  
them, and form juster and more consistent noti-  
ons about them, than the wisest heathen could  
do. Instead of wandering in the darkness of  
error and superstition, we have now shining upon  
us the clear beams of the gospel, that discover  
to us our duty, our nature, our whole being.  
Should we not then, with joy and gratitude, hail  
the birth of this Glorious Being, this Sun of  
Righteousness, that is risen upon us, dispelling  
the night of ignorance, which, for so many ages,  
had covered the whole earth?

A *second* benefit derived from the incarnation  
of our blessed Saviour, is the certainty which we  
have that God will accept our repentance, and  
pardon our sins; an assurance which, although of  
the greatest moment to us, we could have ob-  
tained by no other method but that of a Divine  
Revelation. For let us suppose a wise and think-  
ing

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III.

ing person examining into this matter, by the light of unassisted reason, he must argue upon the subject somewhat in the following manner: "I find a rule of action in my own reason, and in the frame of my nature, which if I should violate, I feel, upon reflection, an inward pain and remorse. This rule is therefore the will of my Creator, is his law, and I am accountable to him for my behaviour. This Creator is perfectly just and wise; he will therefore punish the violation, and will vindicate the authority of his law. But I have transgressed this law, thus am liable to punishment: Yet is he not also merciful? If I be sorry, and beseech pardon for my fault, shall he not forgive? But how is this? Is it necessary that he should punish, yet will he forgive the same person for the same sins? Is it not to be feared that I flatter myself in entertaining such hope? Yet suppose even this; after repentance I disobey again; will he still continue to forgive? I am bound to obey the whole law; can my obedience to a part atone for my disobedience to the rest? How can I reconcile this to the wisdom and justice of the Supreme Lawgiver?"

To this question, I think, reason cannot give a satisfactory answer; here it must fail, and leave him in a miserable uncertainty to be tost between alternate hopes and fears; and I do not see how he can, with any assurance, conclude, that repentance can entitle a sinner to absolute forgiveness from God, much less to his favour. It is by no means clear from reason, that repentance

can



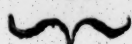
can entitle a sinner to pardon, but surely no one will say that it can to reward. Accordingly the philosophers of old could never arrive to any thing fixed in this point. A person, the most celebrated among them for virtue and wisdom, was so sensible of this ignorance, and the weakness of human reason, that he drew this remarkable conclusion from it, which we read at this day in the writings of a Pagan author: "It is necessary" (says he) to men, that some person should open "their eyes, and discover the will of God to "them; and we must wait patiently for the "coming of this divine messenger."

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And farther, that mankind were in fact universally persuaded of the necessity of some atonement for sins, appears evidently from the custom of offering sacrifices for the expiation, of sins, which prevailed in all nations; for if they had not judged repentance alone insufficient to avert the punishment of their guilt, they never would have had recourse to so burthensome a rite. And yet even these sacrifices could not give any satisfaction in this point to a discerning person; for what connection between the sins of a man and the death of a beast? Can the blood of an innocent creature wash out the sins of a guilty? Or can sins be transferred from the criminal to one incapable of sinning? Or will you say, that the Deity, who possesses all things, can be bribed by gifts and offerings? Nothing of this kind can obtain belief with any reasonable person. What then was the case? Men could have no security from reason, that the Deity would pardon their  
sins

SERM.

III.



sins upon their sorrow for them and prayers for pardon; they found expiatory sacrifices universally established, and, in the uncertainty they were in, gladly embraced even this slight ground of hopes, since they had none surer. Is it then a small privilege to be rescued from this uncertainty? Is it a slight advantage to have it put beyond all doubt that not only great indulgence will be showed to little errors and weaknesses, but even the most heinous sins pardoned to the sincerely penitent; and all this disclosed to us in such a manner as reconciles this extraordinary clemency to the Justice of God. We have seen the great expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world; one worthy of the Majesty of God to accept; one fitted to make us revere him as an awful Judge, at the same time that we love him as a kind and most bountiful Parent.

*Thirdly; We have yet farther cause to esteem the incarnation of our Lord a most happy event to us, since we not only become assured of pardon for our sins by the means of it, but likewise have a strong evidence of God's favour to mankind. God, saith the Apostle, so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And certainly, if we consider the point rightly, we shall see the strongest love to mankind expressed by the Almighty in this dispensation. He consents, that the most excellent Person in the universe, He whom he styles his beloved Son, whom he had crowned with Power and Honour, by whom*

*he*



*he had created the worlds, who is the Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person; He* consents, that this Divine Person should subject himself to a long course of bitter sufferings, to the end that mankind might be delivered from final destruction. Does not this wonderful condescension in the infinite omnipotent Maker of all things, manifest the tenderest affection to the race of man? Again, What love ever exerted itself in such extraordinary effects as that of our Blessed Redeemer? He descends from the throne of glory to take our nature upon him with all the calamities incident to it: We see him exposed to hunger and thirst, to compassion and sorrow, to the various persecutions of inveterate enemies: We behold him, before his last suffering, in an agony of mind not to be described, and at length expiring in the tortures of a slow and painful death: Is it possible that any love could discover itself in more wonderful effects? Have we not the strongest reason to be assured that our salvation is highly valuable in his sight? And may we not expect all the mercy which justice can admit of, from Him who has endured so much for our preservation.

Is it true that the Son of God should die for men? This redemption is wonderful in its nature, in its manner inconceivable; but so is creation; who can explain it? And it is the same power that created which redeemed us: Why should we believe one, yet oppose difficulties to the other? What effect then ought the wonderful nature of this redemption to have upon us?

What

SERM. What but to render us more thankful. The  
 III. high price at which our salvation was purchased,  
 should render the gift precious in our eyes.

And *these glad tidings*, saith the text, *were to all people*; for we are to believe, that they who lived before the coming of our Saviour, who dwell in regions to which the ray of the gospel hath not extended, yet if they act according to the light granted to them, be upright, sincere, penitent for their faults, shall partake in this salvation.

*Fourthly*; Nothing can do more honour to human nature than the solemn event we this day commemorate. What the prophet says with relation to the second temple, that *its glory should exceed that of the first*, because the Messiah was to be present in it, we may, in a stronger sense, apply to our nature, which he condescended to take upon him and join to the Divine. Frail and fallen as it is, we must have a high opinion of its dignity, which was judged worthy of such honour; and what judgment must superior spirits have formed concerning us, when they beheld the Son of God descending from the Majesty of Almighty Power, to take our condition upon him, and be made like to man in every thing, sin only excepted? We cannot doubt that our nature is capable of great excellency, and adapted to noble ends, which had so high a mark of worth and value set upon it.

Thus we see the truth of the Angel's assertion in the text, that the account of our Saviour's birth



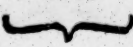
birth was a joyful one to all people, as the benefits of it are very great, and extend to the whole race of mankind. By it there was a happy change wrought in the world, from ignorance and superstition to the knowledge of the true religion. By it we became certain that God will forgive repenting sinners. By it we have manifested the brightest testimony of God's favour to us. By it new dignity and honour are added to our nature. By it we are directed and incited by our Lord's sinless example.

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*Fifthly*; We have seen that this nativity of our Lord was the instrument of publishing the most perfect rule of duty which was ever presented to mankind: It was farther the means of directing us in the road of salvation, by the influence and authority of Christ's sinless example. This example gives spirit and force to all his precepts; this at once teacheth and encourageth us, placing before our eyes the most beautiful of all objects, never elsewhere seen upon earth, Virtue in a visible form, without shade or stain of imperfection.

And truly, all the several causes which commonly produce joy, meet together, and are combined in this one, to render this a season of joy. Do we usually run out to meet the messenger of good news, and receive him with gladness? Surely then we ought to welcome the return of this time, which renews the memory of an event, beyond all others, most transcendantly beneficial to us. Is it agreeable to us to have our hopes awakened, and a prospect of lasting happiness laid open

SERM. open before us? This must be most agreeable,

III.  which gives us a certain expectation of endless felicity. Do we hail the birth-day of a good and beneficent Prince, and celebrate it with all the marks of triumph and exultation? This is yet more; no Prince ever equalled his grandeur, nor conferred such benefits upon any people: Are dignity and honour pleasing to us? Never sure was greater honour conferred upon human nature than in this surprising event, this union of it with the Divine: Do we naturally delight in contemplating things new and wonderful? Never was any thing so amazing, so stupendous as this, a mystery which the Angels of God themselves desire to look into: Is the recovery of health from a grievous and dangerous disease just cause of rejoicing? Then ought we to rejoice, delivered, as at this time, from the most terrible of all diseases and dangers, ignorance and vice, and the wrath of God: Is length of life the object of our wishes? How happy are we who have now revealed to us a certainty of living for ever in unspeakable happiness!

Concerning this joy, however, we should beware of entertaining wrong notions, as the manner of many is. Perverse men! how unreasonably do ye act! Who would pervert the joy springing from religion into the service of vice, and make it the ground of riot and excess? This is pure and lasting; a joy seated in the mind, diffusing through all its faculties a sweet and equal serenity; it overflows in love and gratitude to the Father of Mercies, the Almighty, revering



vering his Wisdom, adoring his Majesty, giving thanks for his infinite Goodness. SERM.  
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With devotion to God, it joins also good will to men; is full of tenderness, compassion and forgiveness, setting right the misguided, visiting the sick and prisoner, comforting the afflicted, relieving the needy. Let our joy thus shew forth itself in these suitable and excellent fruits: To piety add charity: Let us be merciful according to our power, making this, according to the expression of the Angel, *tidings of joy to all people*. Let us now close our discourse on the subject of this day with some thoughts relating to the circumstances of it.

Thou, who, at this time, wert born of a virgin, wrapped in swaddling cloaths and laid in a manger, teach us not to judge from appearance, not to despise the seemingly mean! Thou, who, leaving the throne of Divine Glory, descended to this humble state, inspire into our hearts true humility! Blessed Infant, proclaimed by hosts of Angels, by a new star, worshipped by the wise men of the East, pursued through a tide of innocent blood, enlighten, convert, preserve us after the example of thy holy childhood, make us to grow in wisdom and years, and favour with God and man. Thou art our Redeemer: Receive us to thy table! Thou art our King: O receive us into thy kingdom! Thou, who with the Father and Holy Spirit livest and reignest, &c.

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## S E R M O N IV.

The Inefficacy of external  
Professions.

Preached in Trinity - College, Dublin;  
June 4, 1749.

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St. MATTHEW vii. 21.

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall  
enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth  
the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.*

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**I**T is an ancient observation, that many would have arrived at wisdom, if they had not thought themselves already wise: We may apply this equally to religion. Many would have become good Christians, true disciples of their divine Master, if they had not already believed themselves such: They would have laboured to acquire those spiritual riches which can alone render men happy, if, like the Angel of the church of *Laodicea*, they had not vainly imagined themselves rich, having need of nothing, though in truth they were miserable, and blind and naked. It is therefore a necessary and useful undertaking to explain and to instruct men in the nature of  
true



true religion, and by these means, remove or SERM.  
prevent those dangerous delusions which Christi- IV.  
ans so often fall into, in this most important of  
all points. This I shall attempt to do in dis-  
coursing upon the words of our Lord now read  
to you, which point out, *first*, what is insufficient  
for our salvation, *For it is not enough to say unto*  
*Jesus Christ, Lord, Lord:* And, *secondly*, that  
which is necessary and sufficient to this end,  
*That we should do the will of our Father which is in*  
*Heaven.* I propose to treat distinctly of each of  
these articles. May the things which I shall say  
upon this great point of our holy religion, not  
only give us right apprehensions of Christianity,  
but make such a deep impression on our hearts,  
as shall influence our behaviour, and enable us to  
live conformably to those right apprehensions!

Our great Lord and Master then declares, that  
*not every one that saith unto him, Lord, Lord, shall*  
*enter into the kingdom of Heaven*; as if he had said,  
“To be a true member of my church, the king-  
“dom I come to establish here, and to reign  
“with me hereafter in my kingdom of glory,  
“is a happiness not attainable on such easy con-  
“ditions as many imagine. Although they should  
“pay some reverence, direct some worship to  
“me, and acknowledge me to be the Messiah,  
“they would be still deficient: To this purpose  
“something more real and solid, something of  
“true worth is required. To call me Lord, Lord,  
“is of little value, and what very bad men  
“may do.”

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The justice of this sentence, that the acknowledging Jesus Christ to be the Messiah, and even honouring him as such in a certain sense, is not sufficient to entitle one to admission into his kingdom, will appear from the following considerations.

Jesus Christ may be honoured in three ways; by words and outward expressions of respect; by inward sentiments of the heart; by some actions done in honour of him. Let us now see what we are to think concerning each of these ways.

We are to begin with those who honour him outwardly, whom our Lord seems to describe peculiarly in the character of those that say unto him, Lord, Lord. In this rank we may place all whose Christianity consists entirely in an external profession of Christ's religion, who confine themselves to that particular belief and form of worship in which they were educated, to the observance of ceremonies, to the repeating of certain prayers, to the hearing a fixed number of sermons, and preserving a certain outward decency of behaviour, which, without much pain of self-denial, often acquires the reputation of virtue and piety.

Nothing is more easy than to show that this behaviour cannot make men true disciples of Jesus Christ. These persons are no more than hypocrites and impostors in religion, or, to speak more properly, are indeed destitute of all religion; for if they really believed in God, they could not be so absurd as to think of deceiving him by mere show: No, their actions regard not  
the



the Deity, but men, whom they would deceive SERM.  
IV.  
into esteem for themselves by this counterfeit virtue. How contrary is their whole behaviour to the spirit of the Christian religion, which may be stiled, by its excellence, the religion of the heart, which first introduced into the world a reasonable worship of the Deity, a worship in spirit and truth, which dispenses with burthensome ceremonies, with the sacrificing of oxen and sheep, but which commands us to offer up ourselves to God, our souls and bodies to be a pure and lively sacrifice! And surely he must have a rude, imperfect, notion of the Divinity, who imagines, that the Most High can be pleased with the bowing of the knee, with the elevating of the eyes or hands, with the pronunciation of a set of words, or the hearing certain discourses, with particular gestures of the body, an adherence to received customs, or the observance of stated ceremonies. Men kindle into anger, if they perceive the signs of that respect which is paid to them to be only dissimulation and mockery, and shall not God be displeased with the insolence of a wretched creature, who should dare to treat him in this manner? That God, whose infinite perfections require the highest reverence and honour; that God, who sees the bottom of our hearts, and pierces into the deepest recesses of our souls; that God, who so loved the world, that he sent his only Son to suffer death for its redemption; who gave, who preserves our existence, who pours down upon us every day such inestimable benefits; that God, who will not reward his servants hereafter with

SERM. vain titles and imaginary honours, with shadows  
 IV. and appearances, but will heap upon them happiness without alloy, without end. As nothing  
 ~~~~~ but the utmost folly can entertain such a vain imagination, so it must be the blackest ingratitude which can content itself with offering up to our great Creator, our supreme Benefactor, such an imperfect, frivolous, unworthy service. After this, is it to be wondered at, that our Lord should deny eternal felicity as a reward to so mean a worship, and shut out from his kingdom hypocrites, who during their whole lives have done nothing but cry out with their mouths, Lord, Lord?

Next, what shall we say of those, who proceeding farther, pay some honour to our Blessed Saviour inwardly, in the sentiments of their minds? Are not they worthy of being ranked among his true disciples? Not even all these: For there may be a false, at least an imperfect worship of the heart as well as lips. If they indeed honoured him with a true and sincere reverence, a reverence expressed in a pious observance of his laws, in the imitation of his perfect virtue and goodness, they would be entitled to his favour, and might expect admission into his kingdom. But very different from this is the honour, too often the only one, paid to him by those who esteem themselves good Christians, an honour which is placed in a blind zeal for doctrines, taken up at hazard, in a violent attachment to a party, in furious resentment, a persecuting spirit against all who are of a different opinion: These can have no place in his kingdom. But one of the most frequent

frequent and dangerous sorts of this delusion is, where this supposed honour paid to our Lord, consists in a faith purely barren, where men value themselves upon believing, although their belief produces no good effect in their hearts or conduct.

It is difficult to imagine, that any person who believes the Gospel, its promises and threatenings, can at the same time live viciously : It should seem that such a one, however he may deceive the world, and perhaps himself, is in truth an unbeliever. But because there are many who glory in believing, yet who act in opposition to the Gospel, let us suppose that some of them may be sincere ; it is nevertheless certain, that such belief, however sincere, cannot save any man. It is not to a vain, ineffectual faith, to a faith languid, or rather dead, to a superficial faith, which, if I may so speak, floats upon the mind, but does not sink into the heart, that salvation is promised : That faith which has the promise of a happy immortality is of another kind : It is active, it is lively, it is productive of charity, it is fruitful in good works, it changes, it purifies the heart, it makes us new creatures ; where it enters, it seizes the whole heart and reigns there, it triumphs over all evil passions, it weakens, it destroys vicious habits, and thus vanquishes the world and all its powerful temptations : In one word, it is not a faith which contents itself with paying a wretched homage that costs nothing, a slight respect to our Lord, but one that binds us closely to him, that fills us with love and gratitude towards him,

SERM. that makes us find tranquility, joy, and our greatest pleasure in doing the will of our heavenly Father. Nay, indeed, so far is this barren faith from being meritorious, that it aggravates our guilt, and renders us more inexcusable to our own consciences, and in the sight of God.

IV. What would you say of a rebellious subject, who should plead before his Prince, in excuse of his crimes, that whilst he bore arms against him, his sovereign, he still acknowledged the justness of his title, the lenity of his government, and respected him in his heart? Would you not think him insolent, or absurd, to alledge in his defence, and make a merit of that which renders his guilt inexcusable? This is an exact picture of those pretended Christians, who take a reproach of infidelity as the greatest insult, and yet lead the lives of infidels. No, say they, we have never entertained the least doubt concerning our holy religion; we look upon Jesus Christ as our Redeemer; we acknowledge the truth and divine authority of his gospel.—Be it so, unrepenting sinners: You believe the Gospel, that its truths, its maxims, its promises, its threatening, were revealed from Heaven: But do not you see that it is this very faith which condemns you the more? It is because you are convinced that Jesus Christ is your Lord, because you are persuaded that his gospel is true, for this reason your disobedience is more criminal, your rebellion more inexcusable, your ingratitude to him more black, your hardness of heart more unaccountable, and your punishment

punishment hereafter will be more severe and intolerable. SERM.
IV.

There remains to be considered the third kind of honour paid to our Lord, which consists in obeying some of his commandments; but this falls properly under the second article which we proposed to explain, that which is represented in the text as necessary and effectual to salvation, the doing the will of our heavenly Father: And this is a point well worthy of our most serious attention, for nothing is of more indispensable necessity for every man to understand rightly, and yet there is nothing of which men entertain commonly more confused, partial and false notions.

Doing the will of God then comprehends three things; that we should obey his laws; that we should obey them upon his account; that we should obey his whole law. Each of these deserves to be enlarged upon. And *first*, We are to obey the laws of God.

Man is a free, and at the same time a rational being. As free, he can govern his actions, and conform them to a rule; as rational, he is obliged thus to govern them: He must not act at random, or leave himself to the sole guidance of his appetites, as beasts who are void of reason do; but should act reasonably and from principle, observe consistency, and follow some rule in his conduct. Now what can be a surer or better rule than the will of God? Infinitely wise, he knows what is best and fittest for man; infinitely good,

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IV.

good, he can require nothing from man but what tends to his perfection and happiness; infinitely powerful and just, he can, and certainly will reward most bountifully, those who obey his laws. As therefore our duty is best regulated by the will of God, it ought to be our first care to enquire what this will is, since it is impossible to follow an unknown rule.

Now happily the knowledge of this will is not hard to be attained. To find it out we need not climb up to Heaven, nor dive down into the Abyss; it is near to every one of us, always legible and present; it is written in our minds and hearts, and interwoven in our natures: That love, that admiration of what is just and good so strong within us, that abhorrence of vice, that shame and remorse consequent upon it, loudly proclaim this law. And because mens passions have obscured this lamp of God in our hearts, he has rekindled and farther strengthened it by a new light, revealing to us our duty in the fullest and clearest manner, so that a careful and unprejudiced enquirer cannot be liable to doubt in any considerable article of it.

But it should be observed farther, under this head, that it is not sufficient to know we must do the will of God. Let us not deceive ourselves; Christianity doth not consist either in pure speculation, nor nice reasonings about the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel; not in plausible discourses, nor in some faint notions or resolutions of amendment formed a thousand times, and as often broken; it requires much more; we must perform

The Inefficacy of external Professions. 59

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perform that which God requires of us ; we must act, we must speak as he directs we should ; we must love, we must desire, as he commands ; we must hate, we must abhor, we must fly from that which he prescribes us to hate, to abhor, to fly from ; we must labour in acquiring those virtues which can alone render us amiable in his eyes ; we must imitate those holy men who served him faithfully before our time ; we must imitate the blessed pattern of Jesus Christ, who went about doing good ; we must imitate our heavenly Father as far as he is imitable by us : In one word, we should endeavour to have no other will but that of God ; it should be our most ardent wish, that *his will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven.*

Secondly ; It is not enough that our actions be thus good in themselves, their principle also must be good. We are not only to obey the laws of God, but we should do it for his sake, through love and reverence of him, a desire to please, honour and obey him ; otherwise we do not perform his will. This is included in the very notion of obedience ; for suppose that a person commands me to do a certain action, which I perform not through regard to him or his command, but solely because it is pleasing to myself ; in this case it is manifest, that I do not act in obedience to him, but follow my own inclinations, which, it is probable, that I should equally have followed, if they had been contrary to what he enjoined.

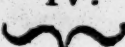
Now

SERM. Now certainly the man who acknowledges that

IV. there is a most perfect excellent Being, the Creator of all things, the Author and Preserver of his life, the Giver of all he does or can enjoy, the Governor of the Universe, must acknowledge that obedience is due to him, that gratitude, reason, interest, all concur in prescribing this obedience: Can then such a person be said to possess the least real worth, if he should live without any sense of the benefits, any love of the goodness, any veneration of the excellence, of this Almighty Parent? And is it not evident that true virtue cannot consist with a neglect and total oblivion of him? So vain and groundless are the boastings of those men, who pretend to the most refined moral virtue, in shutting out all piety and religion, all regard to the Deity, which ought to be the groundwork, and is at least a necessary constituent part of all true virtue.

Is a man sober merely through regard to his health? Is he charitable purely from the impulses of a soft humane temper? Is he faithful in his promises of strict honour and veracity, solely to recommend himself to the friendship of men? None of these do the will of God; for we may lay it down as a rule, that however praise-worthy an action may be in itself, if it be undertaken only from constitution or inclination, to serve some interest or convenience, to obtain some pleasure or praise, without any thought of duty to God, and of religion; in all such cases we do not the will of God but our own; such actions are not truly virtuous. This, however, is not so to be understood

stood as if those other motives were, for that reason, to be entirely excluded: Such is the imperfection of our nature, that reason alone, the excellence of virtue, the love of God, are not sufficient to influence our minds, to raise and support them always above temptations; we must therefore call into our aid all the innocent helps to this purpose with which we are furnished; constitution, passion, a love of reputation, a moderate self-love thus employed, are rendered fit assistant motives to virtue, and from indifferent become laudable, through the goodness of the end they promote.

SERM.
IV.


Thirdly; Our obedience should be universal. Not that we are to pay an absolute unfinning obedience to the laws of God; our great Judge is too just and equitable to require from us a degree of perfection which we are incapable of attaining: Neither are we to understand in this strict sense that remarkable passage of St. James; *Whosoever, saith he, shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of the whole.* This only is meant, that we should propose to ourselves seriously, and exert our utmost endeavours to fulfil the whole law of God; that we should not indulge ourselves in the wilful breach of any commandment, or live in the voluntary practice of any known sin; for if we do, it is manifest that this our partial obedience proceeds not from any due regard to the divine authority, nor any true principle of virtue which would extend equally to the whole law, but from some other cause:

SERM.
IV.

cause : And it may be reasonably concluded, that we should fail in this as well as any other point, if the temptation were equally strong.

Doing the will of God implies, therefore, an obedience to the whole law, not however a complete and unfailing obedience, but sincere, and as pure as our imperfections admit. To conceive this more clearly, imagine to yourselves a very weak person, who has a long journey to make, notwithstanding all the care and caution with which he conducts himself, he shall stumble often, and sometimes fall in the course of it; not that by negligence or design he suffers himself thus to stumble or fall, but merely because his great feebleness makes it impossible for him to perform a long journey without such accidents.

This is an exact representation of Christians in this world. They resolve to direct their lives in every article by the law of God, and to observe all his commandments; they exert their utmost force to accomplish this design; nevertheless, they fail in many points; they fall into sin; not because they suppose this behaviour right, that they may safely allow themselves in such neglect, or that some sins are innocent, but because they are frail and fallible, surrounded by temptations, and unable to guard against and resist all; thus with whatever zeal and ardour they climb up the paths of virtue, the feebleness of their nature retards and often pulls them back. From hence we see, that it is not sufficient to avoid some sins, we must, as far as it is possible, avoid all, not only great and enormous, but small crimes; not the public only,

only, but hidden; those of the heart and tongue as well as such as are expressed in open deeds; those to which interest and pleasure prompt, as well as those more black, which spring from cruelty and malice.

SERM.
IV.

Observe farther; That we should not only abstain from evil actions, we must also perform good. We should judge him to be a very worthless servant, who could alledge to his master, in his own commendation, no more than this, that he had never done him any injury, that he had never destroyed his plantations or cut down his hedges. Just such is the merit of those who pretend to have obeyed the laws of God, merely because they have not signally disobeyed. These men would do well to consider this, who deceive themselves with a persuasion that they are good Christians, purely because they cannot reproach themselves with any flagrant wickedness; yet ask for their good works, they have not any to produce; who are rather without vice than possessed of virtue.

Lastly; They do not the will of God who perform only one sort of good actions, suppose them really good, while they neglect others equally commanded. They are regular in their exercises of devotion, but at the same time morose, positive and censorious. They are just in their dealings, but hard and unrelenting. They are laborious and exact, but haughty and overbearing. They are good-natured and liberal, but sensual

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SERM. sensual and abandoned to pleasure. The virtues
 IV. of these men are justly liable to suspicion; they
 spring not from a desire of obeying God, but
 from their particular circumstances or inclination;
 they are virtues of constitution merely; or of
 worldly prudence: We ought no more to value
 ourselves upon having them, than we should up-
 on our being free from vices directly opposite to
 each other; that we are not at the same time
 profane and superstitious, audacious and fear-
 ful, covetous and profuse, haters of mankind and
 flatterers.

We have now seen what is meant by doing
 the will of our Heavenly Father, which alone can
 gain us admission into his kingdom. Let it be
 our care to apply these observations to ourselves.
 Look into your own hearts. Have you made
 yourself acquainted with the law of God? Have
 you observed it principally out of regard to its
 great Author? And hath this your obedience been
 universal and uniform? If this be so, happy are
 ye: But if the case be otherwise, if you are ig-
 norant of your duty, or have false notions of it;
 if you value yourselves upon virtues that spring
 not from any good motive, but from tempera-
 ment, passion or interest; if you live in any vi-
 cious habit, hoping to atone for it by a few good
 actions, undeceive yourselves: Ye are not true
 disciples of Jesus Christ; ye are in the path of
 error and misery. Cease, unhappy men, to bring
 reproach upon the holy doctrine which you pro-
 fess to believe, calling yourselves Christians,
 while you live in opposition to the rules of Christi-
 anity:

anity : Rather be consistent and renounce the Gos- SERM.
pel : Is not infidelity better than such belief ? For IV.
then, your life would not give the lie to your
faith ; mankind and your own conscience could
no longer upbraid you with so deformed and
shameful a contradiction between your behavi-
our and your profession.

As for us, my brethren, who would yet bear
the name and enjoy the happiness promised to
true Christians, let us, in the name of God, re-
solve to be in effect, true Christians. Let us no
longer, by our manners, bring disgrace upon the
pure religion of Christ, nor give wicked men oc-
casion to ascribe it to our faults, and look upon
Christianity as an useless barren belief, as *a tree
that bringeth not forth good fruit* ; but let us,
on the contrary, behave ourselves in such man-
ner, as to convince men by our conduct, that
we are the true disciples of that Master, who
is Holiness itself, who came into the world, not
that his followers might say to him, *Lord, Lord*,
but to instruct them *to do the will of their Father which
is in Heaven*. Let us show through the whole course
of our lives, that the religion whose doctrines we
firmly believe, whose precepts we resolve steady-
ly to obey, is the most pure, the most perfect, the
most powerful, the most divine of all religions,
which most effectually promotes the glory of God
and the happiness of mankind.

SERMON V.

The Inefficacy of external Professions.

Preached in Trinity - College, *Dublin*;
July 9, 1749.

St. MATTHEW vii. 21.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.

SERM.
V. **I**N a former discourse upon these words, I shewed what was meant by doing the will of God; that it comprehended three things; that we should obey the law of God; that we should obey it for the sake of the lawgiver; that we should obey the whole law. To compleat my design it remains, that I should prove the possibility of doing this will, and the necessity of it to our salvation, which I propose to do in the present discourse.

I am to begin with proving the possibility of obeying the laws of God, upon which point my reason for enlarging somewhat is this.

When we consider the duties commanded by the Christian religion, purity of heart, uprightness of conduct, love of God, and charity to our fellow-

fellow creatures; we cannot but acknowledge, SERM.
V.
that if these duties were universally practised, the condition of mankind would be much happier than it now is, it would bear some resemblance to that which we expect hereafter, and we should enjoy in this life a foretaste, as it were, of the felicity we hope for in another. Yet men, while they praise, neglect these amiable virtues; they extol with idle admiration, but never seek to attain them. Whence cometh this to pass? Is it not because they look upon them as impracticable, they look upon a Christian life as merely notional, as a fine speculation, but impossible in fact? These seem to be the sentiments of many Christians at this day, sentiments most dangerous and fatal, for who shall attempt to obey the will of God, that is persuaded it cannot be obeyed. It is therefore an useful undertaking to remove this delusion, to shew that this duty is practicable, that nothing beyond our power is required of us.

In order to this, consider *first*, That God doth not demand from us a faultless unfinning obedience; it is sufficient that it should be sincere. We are indeed commanded to observe the whole law, yet even here absolute perfection is not required; a right intention, pure unfeigned affection, our utmost care and vigilance are sufficient: In a word they shall be esteemed to do the will of God, who sincerely and faithfully endeavour to do it. This explanation of the text doth alone furnish us with a proof of the point under consideration, the possibility of obeying the law of

68 *The Inefficacy of external Professions.*

SERM. God: For it would be contrary to reason and
 V. common sense to assert, that it is not possible for
 us to do the will of God so far as it is possible,
 and that it is beyond our power to observe his
 law with that exactness which is in our power.

But besides, it seems that nothing can be more directly opposite to the whole word of God in general than this opinion. For why hath God revealed to us his word? Certainly it was not to gratify a vain curiosity, a presumptuous desire of knowing his incomprehensible perfections, and prying into his unsearchable counsels: It was given as a rule principally to direct our conduct, to be *a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path*, to instruct us how we might worship God aright, and entitle ourselves to eternal happiness. But to what purpose are we taught if we cannot execute this? All the commandments contained in his word, the many examples of virtue rewarded and vice punished, the many promises made to piety; the many threatenings denounced against sin; to what end are all these directed? Is it to make us pursue that which is unattainable, to perform that which is impossible, to make us turn away from vices which we shall not, cannot, turn away from?

Why hath the Son of God come into the world to teach us the will of his Heavenly Father? Why hath he delivered to us so many precepts? Why hath he added the encouragement of his own example? Why hath he confirmed his doctrine and divine morality by so many astonishing miracles? What more vain than all this, if the

The Inefficacy of external Professions. 69

law He hath given as the only guide to life and immortality be impracticable? SERM.
V.

Very different from this opinion are the declarations made in that law. Our Lord tells us, that he came into the world to relieve those *that labour and are heavy laden, and to give rest to their souls, for his yoke is easy and his burden is light.* The commandments of God, saith St. John, are not grievous. And in another place the Scripture tells us, *The commandment of the Lord is not hidden from us, neither is it far off: It is not in Heaven, that we should say, who will go up and bring it unto us? Neither is it beyond the sea, that we should require one to go over the sea and bring it unto us; but it is nigh unto us, in our mouth, and in our heart, that we may do it.*

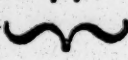
In truth, if the Scriptures were silent in this point, the sentiments of our own hearts must convince us, that it is not impossible to do the will of God. I appeal to the consciences even of sinners. Do they find themselves forced into sin irresistably? Do they find within themselves an absolute inability to perform what they neglect, and to fly from what they practise? Or rather, do they not find that the most violent passions take not away from them all liberty? When we reflect upon our past crimes, do we not always condemn ourselves? Are we not covered with shame when others detect and upbraid us with them? Could this happen if we, who are ever fond of excusing our own faults, had so fair a plea to alledge in our own defence, as an impossibility of doing otherwise. No, certainly, never

SERM. was any man persuaded of this impossibility,
 V. though we often with ourselves persuaded that we
 might continue in the neglect of our duty, and
 stifle the reproaches of conscience.

To give these arguments yet more weight, observe, that this assertion of God, obliging his creatures to an impossibility, is most highly injurious to the Divinity, What! Doth not God know the extent of their power? He, who knows all things, who gave those powers originally, who can encrease or lessen them according to his good pleasure: If it be the will of God that we should observe his commandments, why hath he not given us ability to observe them? Or if he hath thought fit to deny us this ability, why doth he require what is beyond our power? How is this reconcilable with the Justice, the Equity, the Goodness, of the great Father and Author of all being.

Why, moreover, should God promise eternal happiness to the obedient, if obedience were impossible? Would it be acting agreeably to his infinite Goodness, or dealing sincerely with his creatures, to place before their eyes the greatest of all goods, to represent it as the most valuable motive of action, and then to propose an impossible condition, without performing which it is declared unattainable? What sentiments must we have of the Deity, to believe him capable of such a proceeding?

Besides, why should God denounce endless punishments against those who do not his will, if to do it were a thing impossible? In the last dreadful

ful day, shall the conscience of sinners have no- SERM,
thing to reproach them with but their want of V.
power to perform that which was required of 
them, that they have done here only that which
they could not avoid doing, and neglected that
alone which they could not perform? Is it in this
alone their torment shall consist, that *worm of*
conscience which dieth not? Surely all who consider
seriously, must acknowledge it the most horrible
of blasphemies to affirm, that God shall inflict end-
less sufferings upon men, merely for not having
done what was impossible.

To these general arguments we might add ma-
ny particular proofs of this truth, the possibility
of doing God's will. We might shew, that there
is not one of the duties enjoined by Him, which
is not reasonable, just, equitable, perfectly agree-
able to the nature of man in general, as well as
to the condition of each individual: We might
shew that they are useful in this life for the pre-
servation of our health, fortunes, reputation and
tranquility of mind: We might shew, that there
are few of these duties to which we are not inclin-
ed by sentiments that God hath implanted in our
minds; among these I reckon the sentiments of
humanity we feel for all men, the sentiments of
pity we feel for the miserable, those of gratitude
to our benefactors, the sentiments of emulation
excited in us by the virtues of our equals, our
perpetual desire of being approved by the wise
and good, the shame and fear of falling into de-
served contempt, and lastly, the honour which
distinguished virtue always commands even from

SERM. those destitute of virtue. Thus, if we look at-
 V. tentively into our own frame, we shall see, that
 ~~~~~ God requires from us scarcely any duty to which  
 we are not strongly incited, and in the practice of  
 which we are not wonderfully supported by these  
 natural instincts; and herein we must acknow-  
 ledge and feel the design and work of an infinite-  
 ly good God, who hath himself impressed upon  
 our hearts these sentiments to stir us up to a per-  
 formance of our duty, and to render the perform-  
 ance of it easy and agreeable to us. But the ar-  
 guments already alledged, which seem abundantly  
 sufficient to put the point in question beyond  
 all doubt, render unnecessary a longer and more  
 minute detail of these particulars.

I go on, as I proposed, to show the necessity of  
 doing the will of God, without which *we cannot*  
*enter into his kingdom*. Whence is it that there is  
 so little piety observable among Christians? Is it  
 not because they imagine that they may be saved  
 without it? Generally speaking, all men wish to  
 be happy in a future life as well as in the present,  
 but they would obtain this happiness without  
 trouble, without laying themselves under any re-  
 straint, or departing in the least from the maxims  
 of the world: What they desire so earnestly they  
 come at last to believe possible, and raise up to  
 themselves a thousand delusions, which all tend  
 to widen the narrow path to Heaven, to persuade  
 them that they may be saved without virtue:  
 There is not, therefore, any truth which ought  
 to be more earnestly recommended, more fre-  
 quently inculcated, more strongly insisted upon,  
 than



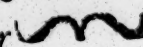
than this important one contained in the text, SERM.  
V.  
that no man *shall enter into the kingdom of God without doing his will*. If the Christian religion were agreeable to the notion which the greater part of its professors form of it, if it required no more piety and virtue than they possess, if it dispensed with all the duties which they dispense with themselves, if it suffered them to be as much attached to the world as they are, one might certainly conclude, that a religion so slack, so loose in its precepts, must be false, and its pretensions to a divine original groundless. No, undoubtedly, such a religion could not have for its author, God, who is infinitely just and holy, who loves virtue and holiness above all things, *who is light, in whom there is no darkness; who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; who hates all workers of iniquity; before whom the wicked man shall not abide*. Is it to be imagined, that a God so holy should not demand more zeal in his worshippers, more purity in their intentions, more regularity in their behaviour, more sincerity, more charity, more humility, than the greater part of Christians at this day possess? Shall a God so holy suffer his worshippers to be so sensual, such idolaters of the goods of this world, so ambitious as are most of those who now call themselves Christians? Shall a God so holy recompence such indifference in his service, a life so careless, so voluptuous, so irregular, not to say dissolute, in which they allow themselves, shall he recompense this life with a happiness beyond imagination, a glory without end? Certainly this cannot be: It shocks common sense to suppose it. We  
must

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SERM. must lead holy lives if we would please a God  
 V. who is Holiness itself, or expect from him any re-  
 ward here or hereafter. A religion which would  
 dispense with all uprightness, and promise an  
 eternal reward to persons destitute of virtue, is  
 undoubtedly falshood and imposture; such a reli-  
 gion could not be from God, but must be the in-  
 vention of some impure spirit, designing thereby  
 to encourage men in secure unrepented iniquity;  
 such a religion would be worse than was that of  
*Pagans*, who, ignorant as they were of the true  
 God, admitted only virtuous souls into the regions  
 of happiness, and banished the impious and pro-  
 fligate into eternal darkness.

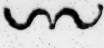
But this is not the case of the Christian revela-  
 tion: If holiness be the true characteristick of a  
 religion derived from Heaven, we have not the  
 least reason to doubt concerning the divine origi-  
 nal of that Christianity we profess; for it bears  
 that characteristick impressed upon it in the  
 strongest manner, nor was there ever in the world  
 a religion comparable to it in this respect. To  
 be convinced of this we need not go far, we need  
 but open the holy oracles in which it is taught,  
 and we shall find proofs in every page. The  
 knowledge that divine book gives us of God, his  
 nature and works, is not a barren one; but as  
*St. Paul* expresses it, *the acknowledging the truth  
 which is after godliness*. The mysteries we learn  
 there are not vain speculations, but *mysteries of  
 godliness*, that is, powerful motives to a good life.  
 And indeed what has there ever appeared more  
 holy, more perfect, more sublime, than those di-  
 vine



vine precepts, that exalted morality taught by Je- SERM.  
sus Christ in his Gospel? Can the love of God be V.  
carried farther than to love him *with all our*   
*hearts, with all our minds, and with all our souls?*  
Or the love of our neighbour than *to love*  
*him as ourselves*, and to rank among neighbours  
even our enemies? Can generosity be carried far-  
ther than *to bless them that curse us, to do good to*  
*them that hate us, and to pray for them who despite-*  
*fully use and persecute us?* Can purity and chastity  
be carried farther than to suppress not only bad  
actions, but evil thoughts and desires just spring-  
ing up in the soul? Can patience be carried far-  
ther than to take up the cross after our Lord's  
example, to rejoice and glory in our sufferings?  
Can trust in God be carried farther than to leave  
all things to his Providence, and receive all events  
as the just dispensations of unerring wisdom? Can  
meekness and moderation be carried to a greater  
height than in stifling the first motions of anger  
in the breast as highly criminal? Can greater per-  
fection be aimed at than to propose God as our  
pattern, to labour, as far as frail human nature  
can admit, to be *perfect as our Father in Heaven is*  
*perfect?*

Such is the morality of Jesus Christ; and can  
we doubt whether it be of divine original? Can  
we conceive laws more excellent, that bear bright-  
er marks of God's authority? But let us not ima-  
gine, that these are precepts intended only for the  
few, for the wiser and more perfect, but imprac-  
ticable by ordinary Christians, and not obliging  
them who may be saved through the merits of  
our

SERM. our blessed Redeemer, without observing them.

V.  On the contrary, they are laws given alike to all, alike binding all. He himself, the great Law-giver, frequently declareth this. He promises happiness to those only that observe them; to the *poor in spirit, to the meek, to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, to the pure in heart, to the merciful, and to the peace-makers.* He tells us, *that every tree which beareth not good fruit, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire :* And to his disciples he saith, *that except their righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees they shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.* Most strong to this purpose are his words in the text, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* And to these express declarations those of his Apostles every where fully correspond. This is the doctrine of the whole Scriptures; it is the principal, the most essential point of Christianity, which we ought to inculcate the most frequently, to understand the most clearly, to reflect upon the most attentively. Every part, every article of Christianity tends to this great end; all is directed to the advancement of piety, as the only means of obtaining for us true happiness; so that nothing can be more false, more heretical, I may say more Antichristian, than to maintain that we may be saved without virtue.

The Gospel, it is true, promiseth forgiveness, but it is only to the repenting sinner. And who is he? Not every one who feels some regret, drops a few tears, or who is even pierced with a lively sor-

row



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row for his sins: He must break from them; he must cease to do evil; he must learn to do well; he must change his habits, behaviour, inclination and heart; he must *cast off the old man, and become a new creature*. Such only are true penitents, and entitled to pardon by the promise and through the merits of our Lord.

At the same time we acknowledge, that there are found in Scripture passages which promise salvation to all who have faith, from whence some would infer, that to be saved we need only believe. True, we need only believe; but then we must believe as we ought, sincerely with our whole heart; our actions, our behaviour, must prove the sincerity of this belief; it must be a belief which shall change, shall purify our hearts, and enable us to conquer all the temptations of the world. This is the explanation of this matter every where given in Scripture. And indeed what can be more absurd and extravagant than this opinion of belief without works being sufficient to salvation? It is, as if one should say, that it is sufficient to believe God to be infinitely perfect and adorable, but for that reason it is not necessary to adore him; that it is sufficient to believe God to be our Creator, our Lord and Master, and therefore it is not necessary to honour or obey him; that it is sufficient to believe God to be the Giver of every good thing we enjoy, and therefore it is not necessary to shew the least gratitude towards him. Can any thing be more wild and inconsistent? And may we not justly wonder at men who have advanced seriously,  
that

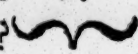
SERM.  
V.  
~~~~~

SERM. that we shall be excused from doing our duty,
 V. merely because we believe it to be our duty?

In vain would the assertors of this opinion endeavour to prove it by the authority of *St. Paul*, who says, that *man is justified by faith, not by the works of the law*: By which passage no more is meant than this, that we are justified or rendered acceptable to God by obedience to the Gospel, not by the works of the law, that is, not by observing the ceremonies prescribed in the law of *Moses*: And this explication is agreeable to the Scripture, to reason, and the context; whereas the other, the sense they would put upon it, is inconsistent with all.

From that which hath been delivered to you on this occasion, we learn what is the spirit and genius of the Christianity we profess. Its great aim is to render men holy, to lead them through the path of virtue to endless felicity. What may we not expect from such a religion, in which every thing obligeth us, all parts encourage us, all excite and urge us on to piety? Ought not Christians to distinguish themselves from the rest of mankind by extraordinary virtue? We might reasonably expect to meet with nothing among them but justice, sincerity, moderation, charity, humility, zeal and devotion. But, alas, how little conformity have the lives of the greater number with their belief! If God had sent his Son into the world merely to absolve mankind from all obligation to sincere piety; had he declared, that instead of a good and holy life, he would accept of empty professions and frivolous ceremonies

ceremonies which reach not the heart, could the SERM.
general behaviour of Christians be much different V.

from what it now is? Whence can this proceed? 

Whence this prodigious opposition between the belief and practice of Christians? Is it that in their hearts they disbelieve the religion they outwardly profess? Corrupt as men are, we cannot imagine infidelity to be thus universal: On the contrary, it is probable that the greater part of vicious men are in some sort persuaded of the truth of Christianity; they make even merit of this persuasion, and build their hope of salvation upon it. We must search then for the cause of this inconsistency, not in their unbelief, but in their ignorance of the true nature of the religion they profess. They form notions concerning it either entirely false or very imperfect: Generally speaking, they do not understand the true end and design of it; they do not believe that every thing contained in it tends to piety; they neither know the nature nor extent of that piety, much less are they persuaded, as they ought, of its absolute necessity to their salvation. Is there a man truly pious, who has the welfare of his immortal soul at heart, who sincerely labours to obey the precepts of his divine Master through the whole tenor of his life? What judgment do you imagine the world likely to form of such a person? Would it not condemn him as an hypocrite, an artful pretender to extraordinary sanctity, or as one visionary and an enthusiast? Whence is this, but that in a world which calls itself Christian, we have almost lost the right notion

SERM. tion of Christianity? Even they among us who

V. seem to think and discourse most about it, are
 too apt to fall into a grievous error, to mistake the least for the principal part of it; to employ themselves in curious speculations, in mysteries and subtle questions, while they neglect its essence and vitals, the divine morality of Jesus Christ. Thus contending eagerly about opinions, about doctrines and ceremonies, they come by degrees to forget that this holy religion was brought down from Heaven by Jesus Christ, not to busy the wits nor amuse the imaginations of men, but to purify their hearts and regulate their behaviour; and till they root out these false notions, till they lay the stress where they ought, upon a good and upright life, this religion, pure and holy as it is, will remain barren and ineffectual.

As for us, my brethren, let us, agreeably to the text, and that which hath been delivered in confirmation of it, rest persuaded, that the great end and design of our divine religion is the advancement of holiness. Let us acquaint ourselves with the true nature and chief duties of Christian piety, and remain firmly convinced, that without the practice of them we cannot be eternally happy. But if this be our conviction, if we be assured of this most important truth, what use shall we make of it? Thus persuaded, shall we live as if we believed it not? Knowing thus clearly what is necessary, I say absolutely necessary to our salvation, shall we neglect to practise it, shall we not even practise the contrary? Is not this to renounce our salvation, to cast away our immortal

tal souls, to rush willingly upon utter destruction? Good God preserve us from such desperate folly!

SERM.

V.

Let us reflect upon these things, while we yet may, to purpose; let us engrave deeply in our hearts the truths now laid before us; truths, which the concurring voice of Scripture and reason, of God and man, of our own conscience and most precious interests, join in recommending to us. If the road of piety were strowed with brambles and thorns, if a Christian life were as difficult and laborious as sensual men imagine it to be, yet since it is the only path leading to eternal happiness, we should resolve upon it in like manner as we take a disagreeable medicine, or undergo a painful operation for the recovery of health. But this is by no means the case; sensual men are improper judges of the condition of the good and pious; consult these, the good and pious, who alone deserve credit in the point, they all with one voice assure you, that they would not exchange their condition for the happiest vice can bestow; they declare themselves possessed of ease, satisfaction, and tranquility of mind, of inward pleasures unknown to the sensual; they speak of these sometimes with holy raptures. Agreeable to theirs is also the language of the Scriptures; *Great peace have they who love thy law, O God. If you would find ease and rest to your souls, saith our Lord, take my yoke upon you. The kingdom of God consists in justice, in peace, in joy, which we have through the Holy Ghost. Rejoice continually in the Lord, for the peace of God passeth all understanding.*

G

Let

82 *The Inefficacy of external Professions.*

SERM. Let us therefore enter, let us enter without de-
V. lay into this beautiful, this delightful road of pi-
ety. It is the road to Heaven; it is the only
road: We shall not lose by it, nay we shall gain,
even in this life, with respect to that which is to
come, the life for ever, we shall be infinite gain-
ers. Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

Inequality of Condition advantageous
to Society.

Preached at St. *Andrew's* Church, *Dublin*;
for the Support of the Free-school;
February 29, 1756.

PROVERBS xxii. 2.

*The rich and poor meet together, the Lord is the Maker
of them all.*

THE difference of conditions observable
among men, hath too often an effect
opposite to that which, if rightly con-
sidered, it would produce. An argument of the
Wisdom of Providence, it is made an objection
against Providence; naturally a bond of union
among men, it is rendered a source of perpetual
dissention. From hence we easily see how very
material it is to form right apprehensions in this
point, as upon them chiefly depends the regula-
tion of life, the peace of individuals, and flourish-
ing state of the community. To settle in our
minds just notions hereof, is the intent of the

SERM.
VI.

G 2 ensuing

SERM. ensuing discourse; and I have chosen the words
VI. of the text for a guide to our thoughts herein.

~~~~~ *The rich and poor meet together, that is, they*  
are mingled in the intercourse, in the common  
offices of life; *the Lord is the Maker of them all.*  
the Providence of God causeth this mixture, hath  
ordained both ranks; in which words ye are to  
remark the doctrine, that God hath appointed  
both states, some to be rich, some poor; which  
consideration naturally leads to enquire into the  
duties of those in each station. Accordingly, I  
design to prove that God hath appointed both  
states; this is my first point: My second shall be  
to trace out the duties incumbent on those of  
each condition: And lastly, I shall make some  
application to this particular occasion. This is  
the method I shall pursue, and I hope the im-  
portance of the subject may claim your atten-  
tion.

I say, *first*, That the difference of conditions  
that some want, some abound, proceedeth from  
the Author of Nature; *The Lord is the Maker of*  
*them all.*

In proof of which observe, that man is, alone,  
unable to supply his own wants. Leave a single  
person to his own unassisted industry, he could  
scarcely find the means of satisfying the appetites  
necessary to life; he could but feebly, if at all,  
guard against the inclemency of seasons, and cer-  
tainly could not repel the fury of wild beasts,  
and prevent the many accidents to which he is  
liable. Or granting these things to be practi-  
cable,



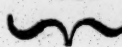
cable, what sort of creature must he be? Cut off SERM.  
from all converse with others, from all improve- VI.  
ment obtained by discourse, consultation, general  
experience, must he not become a savage, little  
differing from the beasts of the field and forest,  
with whom he dwells?

Beside this necessity for Society, there is also  
a love of it implanted in our breasts. Place a  
man amidst all the enjoyments, all the happiness  
which you can imagine heaped upon a solitary  
life, yet deny him a friend, a companion, an ac-  
quaintance, with whom he may communicate  
these pleasures, he is, he must be, wretched; he  
must also be mean and worthless; for our best  
principles and affections, those which raise hu-  
man nature to the highest dignity, to some re-  
semblance of the Divine, can be exerted only in  
Society. Nature therefore, that is indeed the  
Author of Nature, points out to us *Society*.

Let us next proceed a step farther; I ask you,  
Can Society be maintained without a subordina-  
tion of conditions? Consider, some there must be  
to govern, to make, to execute laws, to provide  
against dangers, to preserve order, and punish  
irregularities; others must obey, submit to, and  
support authority. Take away this order, the  
bands of Society burst asunder. Here then is sub-  
ordination.

*Again*; among men ye cannot but observe a  
great diversity of natural talents; some excel in  
the powers of the mind, in sagacity, understand-  
ing and prudence; others in bodily endowments,  
in health, strength and agility. Doth not nature,

SERM. bestowing her gifts in this manner, prescribe different

VI.  ferent occupations, from whence must arise a difference of conditions; while some, by their prudence, consult for the rest, these should, by their activity, maintain the former in necessary ease and plenty, council and action supporting each other?

Suppose *farther*; Property once established; (and without it there cannot be Society), suppose it in the beginning distributed equally to all; yet from the various tempers of men, some inclined to hoard and to extend their possessions, others to squander and diminish, an inequality of property must ensue, which, in process of time, must very much increase, and at length introduce that great diversity which we see at this day; a consequence which, as man is constituted, seemeth unavoidable.

“But, you say, allowing your whole argument, “Yet why this vast inequality? Herein is the “evil: Why should some abound in great superfluity, others want, even to misery?”

Concerning this point, one thing should be observed. Providence hath ordained an inequality of conditions; but this is much increased by vice, by fraud, covetousness and ambition; hence those extremes complained of. Now this latter increased inequality should not be charged on Providence, being the consequence of mens own sins: This part, therefore, entereth not into the present question; allow for this exception, and the difficulty will quickly vanish.

For



For let us suppose every thing possible done in SERM.  
order to satisfy you. Take into your own hand VI.  
the disposal of affairs. You establish a society in  
which are no extremes, all are in the middle  
state, if some be more rich, yet none want.—  
Must not this be a happy society?—No; the very  
reverse; the most wretched of all societies, if in-  
deed such a one could subsist: — But why? — A  
little attention will soon convince you that it must  
be so.

To the support of individuals in every society,  
many things are necessary to be done, which are  
attended with much hazard, difficulty and toil;  
who shall perform these? Consider thou who rea-  
sonest in this manner, that house which protecteth  
thee from the weather must partly be dug out of  
the entrails of the earth, raised from the bottom  
of deep quarries, of dark and dangerous mines;  
must partly be hewn down from vast forests, erec-  
ted and combined with much skill and patience.  
Thou who sleepest in down and indolence till  
noon, little thinkest thou by what hazards thou  
art maintained in ease and plenty; through  
what tempestuous seas and rage of intemperate  
climates the hardy sons of commerce bring the  
instruments of pleasure and pomp; even that fire  
which warmeth us is not procured without trou-  
ble; that bread which sustaineth us must be earned  
by hard labour from the stubborn soil. How  
should the weak, the sickly, the aged, find at-  
endants to minister to their feebleness, or the  
studious and contemplative be supported in their  
useful and honourable leisure? If all were at ease,

SERM. who would undergo this necessary drudgery? Un-

VI. doubtedly it is this useful poverty, this happy indigence, which reconcileth some to the hardest and most servile employments; pride, the love of ease, nay of life, give way to prospect of reward, to the hope of affluence, at least of a competency. Take away all want, industry and order vanish, society falls into confusion, the rich must starve in the midst of plenty. The Author of Nature hath framed human life as he hath done the universe; it is by diversity of conditions there, as by opposition of the elements here, that the whole is sustained; these, partially observed, are discords; but the great Author hath so combined them, as by their mixture to form the full, complete, universal harmony of things. The necessities of all ranks connect all; the wants of the rich convey plenty to the poor; the wants of the poor minister to those of the rich.

The sum is; Society is from God, and difference of conditions is necessary to its subsisting; from whence it follows, that this difference of conditions is from God, which was my first point.

*Secondly*; This truth, thus established, opens the way to the determination of the duties required from those who are placed in each condition, a matter of great and general concernment.

Art thou poor? Repine not, murmur not against Providence. Reflect thus with thyself: From the arguments laid down it is manifest that some one must be in the rank I possess; why another,



ther, not I? Or rather, why not I? Doth not the great Maker best know what situation befits each part of his workmanship? Can I range them more skilfully? Such complaints are impious; they are vain also; shall ignorance correct supreme Wisdom, weakness contend with Omnipotence? Besides, is happiness always annexed to riches, misery to want? Surely not; they depend much more on the disposition of our own minds; and without doubt, the covetous and ambitious, greedy of gold and honours, amid heaps of both, are less happy than the contented labourer and mechanic. Wherefore, instead of murmuring at my condition, I will seek to behave myself well in it; not envying those who are more successful, but *studying to be quiet, and to do mine own business.*

Thus resolving, thus acting, thou shalt answer thy Lord's purpose, and obtain his approbation, who regardeth not station but behaviour, not the rank but the heart.

Wherefore, to Contentment add *Industry*. Whatever be thy situation, whether thou livest by hard labour, by the exercise of a trade or handicraft, or art placed in some lower branch of commerce, in whatsoever rank thou serveest the public, do it with diligence; thus shalt thou avoid the mischiefs of sloth, of idleness, vice, extreme want, and be a worthy member of the community.

*Farther*; To both these, *Contentment* and *Industry*, join *Honesty*. The greatest evil of poverty is, that it tempteth to lay hold on dishonest gain: Shun this as the worst of ills: Better certainly is

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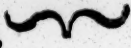
~~~~~ a morsel earned by honest industry, than the most abundant plenty acquired by fraud. However obscure thy condition, while thou art honest and sober, thou art, in the eye of reason and of God, worthy of regard and esteem; thou hast peace of mind to soften thy toil, and the blessed prospect of hereafter.

Let us next address ourselves to those of the other rank.

Ye who are rich, bear ever in your minds from whence ye derive the advantages that attend on plenty; by whose gift were ye born of wealthy parents? Who hath bestowed on you favourable opportunities? Who hath crowned your undertakings with good success? Ought not your hearts to be filled with gratitude to this munificent benefactor? Ought ye not to return him thanks and praises, to love and adore his overflowing Goodness? These things ye should think of the more carefully, as those riches which ought to make you grateful, tempt strongly to ingratitude. They puff up your minds with high opinions of your own worth, corrupt you with a love of pleasure, and tempt you to affect independency, independency even of God; so vain, so frantic is man! as if the possession of an inconsiderable part of this little globe could exempt him from a dependency on the omnipotent Maker, the Lord of the wide-extended universe.

Again; Beware more especially of a fault too common in prosperity, of *despising the poor*.

Your riches are the gift of God, so is his poverty; reverence the Lord of all in his lowest dispensations:

penfations: Befide, his poverty is neceffary to SERM.
fupport your riches; by his induftry alone ye can VI.
enjoy them: Nay, he is lefs dependent than you; 
he can fubfift tolerably well without you, but ye
rich muft be wretched without the fervice of the
poor. Above all, reflect that he is a man of the
fame nature with yourfelves; circumftances of
fortune may make a wide difference in outward
appearance; true worth lies deeper in the foul,
which is often as pure and bright beneath a coarfe
garment, as under the glittering of gold or blaze
of jewels.

Laftly; Learn the true ufe of riches. When
you have fupplied your own wants, and the wants
of thofe more immediately dependent on you,
confider them only as a depofit in your hands,
entrufled with you to render eafy this vaft ine-
quality in human conditions, to be employed in
foothing diftreff and relieving neceffity. This is
the nobleft ufe of riches: In fo doing ye are the
ftewards, the delegates, if I may fo fpeak, the
affiftants of Providence, counterworking the vices
and follies of mankind, and banifhing mifery
from among the works of God.

And now that I have mentioned this ufe of
riches, give me leave to enlarge upon it: it near-
ly relates to and introduceth the laft article of
this difcourfe, *the Occafion* now recommended to
you.

This virtue of bounty or charity, in whatfoever
view we confider ourfelves, whether as men, as
Chriftians, or members of fociety, will appear to
be

SERM. be our duty; suitable to our nature as we are
 VI. men; enjoined by our religion as Christians; be-
 coming and useful as citizens.

That as Christians we are obliged to do charitable actions, cannot be doubted, the holy oracles abounding with express commands to this purpose, such as, *Turn not away thy face from any poor man; To do good and to distribute forget not; Cast thy bread upon the waters; Be merciful after thy power; Give alms of that thou hast; God loveth the chearful giver*: With many others equally positive, which every one's memory cannot fail of suggesting to him: So that certainly they who live in a wilful neglect of this duty, do either not believe or do not attend to the Gospel.

But bear in mind this one remark, although alms-giving be recommended chiefly to the rich, yet it is also enjoined to those of lower ranks, in proportion to their power. What I have to say, therefore, relateth to them likewise in this proportion.

Farther; It is suitable to our nature as we are men, else why the affection of pity so deeply rooted in our breasts? When the groans, the sight of extreme misery, wound your ears or eyes, whence is that tender emotion within you? What meaneth this cry sounding from the bottom of your hearts, *relieve, assist the wretched*. Can you silence this at will? Can you look on calm and unmoved, and refuse succour? He is a savage, not a man, who can. No; you are touched, you are thrilled; you are melted, you adopt the sorrows
 of

of the sufferer, you breathe his sighs, you utter his groans: "Far hence indolence, far, away, every narrow, every selfish passion!" Your passions, your thoughts, for some moments, your whole soul, become possessed by another. Well; you comply with this importunate advocate within you; *you assist, you relieve*; How are you affected? Are you not pleased, delighted? You feel a calm rational satisfaction; you approve yourself; you feel that you are a better man for it. Is not this the instinct of nature, the judgment of reason, or, most properly the voice of God?

This duty is also becoming and useful as we are members of society. *Becoming*, for what is the character you approve? Who is the man you esteem? Whom, in your sober thoughts, would you wish to resemble? Surely the good, the kind, the generous. Which are the actions that, at first sight, win over your affection, claim, frequently extort, applause? The good and generous. This is so known a truth, that they who seek to render themselves beloved, endeavour to be, or appear to be, bountiful.

Nor is this duty less *useful* than becoming; for since the end of society is to provide for the security, ease and convenience of all, and since from the nature, and yet more from the vices, of mankind, a great inequality is necessary, what can be more conducive to this end, than to have, in the abundance of the rich, a source opened to supply the wants of the poor? Human laws may prevent public injustice; it is the hand of charity alone that descends to the most private distress,

to

SERM.

VI.

to sooth the pains and heal the wounds caused by accident or vice; she drieth up the tears of secret grief, proppeth the feeble steps of declining age, and sheddeth comforts even on the bed of death. And where there are so many ways of suffering which justice cannot redress, nor prudence avert, how wretched would men be if charity did not come in to fill up their deficiency? What other counterbalance is there to all the evil passions, envy, covetousness, revenge, so frequent, so pernicious?

In a world abounding with vices and calamity, ye see how necessary is this kind comforter; remove charity, human life becomes a vast scene of woe. Speak her praises ye who best can tell, ye maimed, ye sick and wounded, restored daily to health and strength by her care and medicines. Speak her praises, ye lunatics and idiots, in whom she rekindleth the extinguished beam of reason, or mitigates the absence of it. Speak ye her praises, whom Providence hath visited with loathsome incurable diseases, whom she withdraws from the public eye, guides with tender hand to life's last verge, and prepares to meet with resignation the awful concluding moment. Ye who travel and are heavy laden, unhappy women, who, surrounded by poverty in that hour of peril, must have perished, perhaps with your tender burthen, on the threshold of life; speak ye her praises, by her bounty now joyful mothers.

And O! whither should these children here before you, desolate and friendless, seek for comfort but from

from your Goodness? Charity is to them parents, SERM.
 kinsmen, friends, guardians, instructors: All these VI.
 they hope to find, all these they have hitherto
 found in you.

I might indeed go on to paint to you the wants
 ye are exhorted to remove, the evils ye are en-
 treated to prevent, such as poverty, nakedness,
 sloth, diseases, shame, death untimely, often in-
 famous.

I might go farther, I might lend my voice to
 these young creatures, and thus address myself to
 you in their names.

“ We are brought into life with the disadvan-
 “ tages ye see us under, not through our own
 “ fault, but by the unsearchable councils of the
 “ Most High. We are destitute, friendless; our
 “ childhood is encompassed with wants; igno-
 “ rance, idleness, vices lie in ambush for our
 “ riper years. Alas! which way shall we turn us!
 “ We have no refuge but in your goodness. We
 “ have minds and bodies willing and able to learn
 “ and to labour: Put it in our power to employ
 “ them aright; we shall not long be a burthen;
 “ we shall be useful to the public. Neither do we
 “ urge you to much expence; a trifle, a small
 “ portion of your superfluity, may do all this good.
 “ We shall return you what alone we can, our
 “ thanks and praises, and add our prayers for you
 “ to God, who *will reward the liberal soul.*”

But I wander from my purpose; I would not,
 I ought not to move your passions. This place,
 this occasion rejecteth such arts, nor do ye need
 them. I have besides much weightier motives to
 urge,

SERM. urge, your own nature, your reason, your conscience, the commandment of the Almighty.

VI. *And if with these high motives, pity should mingle a tender thought, check it not, indulge it. It is not weakness, it is humanity, goodness; it is the most amiable principle in our nature.*

The approaching season of humiliation and abstinence furnishes an additional motive to this goodness. Can ye better prepare yourselves for the holy exercise then recommended to you, for the raising up your minds from the follies and pleasures about you, and fixing them upon God, your own souls, and a life to come, than by contemplating distress, drying up tears, relieving misery, preventing vice, saving both souls and bodies?

Give me leave to add one remark suggested by our own circumstances and situation.

When the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, saith the Psalmist, the inhabitants thereof shall learn wisdom.

Who among us hath not had the strongest warnings thus to *learn wisdom*.

Recollect; but a few years have past, since a horrid rebellion was kindled in our neighbouring kingdom, and we justly dreaded that the flames might have reached us. Had the contagious distemper which swept away such vast numbers of cattle, spread hither, it must have soon laid waste our less plentiful island.

We have felt, or have cause to fear, some part of the evils that spring from divisions. And now we behold impending a mighty war, against an enemy

enemy active and ambitious. We have just seen SERM.
 public credit stabbed with repeated, seemingly, al- VI.
 most mortal wounds, bleeding yet and languish-
 ing. And lo! the most terrible of God's judg-
 ments *hath been abroad in the earth*; but the other
 day a rich and friendly city, more populous than
 our own, was overturned from its foundations, and
 a fourth part of the inhabitants buried in the
 ruins; in the mean while, strange and astonishing
 agitations of the sea were seen and felt; our own
 shores trembled; since which time frequent earth-
 quakes have shaken nations the most distant from
 each other, beyond the example of former ages.

Must not every Christian acknowledge herein
 the hand of the Almighty? Should not the dan-
 gers we have escaped, teach us those we are to
 fear? What is admonition to-day, may be pu-
 nishment to-morrow. And is this a time for
 amusement and dissipation, for animosities and ir-
 religion, for profusion and luxury, for vanity and
 gaming? Ought we not rather to humble our-
 selves before our all-seeing Judge, to implore his
 mercy, and seek to deserve his favour by lives
 worthy of our holy faith, by piety, justice and
 universal charity; that charity which shall *cover a*
multitude of sins? O delay not nor defer! Embrace
 the present opportunity of well-doing: Preserve
 innocence, instruct ignorance, befriend the de-
 solate condition of these young creatures, contri-
 bute to breed them up religious, honest, chaste,
 industrious, useful members of the community.
 What action can be more humane, more chris-
 tian? Wherein can man resemble so nearly the

H

Goodness

SERM. Goodness of Providence, creating, superintending,
VI. blessing? In so doing, we may hope from that
Providence for public prosperity and private happiness.

Let us therefore, my brethren, join in the words of this day's *Collect*, humbly beseeching the Almighty God, "That he would pour into our
" hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the
" very bond of peace and of all virtues, without
" which, whosoever liveth is dead before him."

*Which petition may God of his mercy grant, through
the merits and mediation of his Son Jesus Christ
our Lord.*

SERMON

SERMON VII.

Death entailed on Mankind by the
Fall of *Adam*.

Preached in Trinity - College Chapel,
Dublin; July 9, 1749.

ROMANS V. 12.

*Wherefore, as by one man death entered into the world,
and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for
that all have sinned.*

THE persons who examined into human nature most attentively, were in all ages perplexed with the inconsistencies and contradictions they met with, and divided into different opinions, according to the various lights in which they surveyed it. They, who beheld its bright side only, were delighted with its dignity and excellence; they admired the comprehension of memory, the sagacity of reason, which extends its searches from the minutest to the most distant objects of the universe; its vast unbounded views, its hope of immortality, its love of truth and virtue, and its abhorrence of vice.

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VII.

SERM. These seemed to be qualities of the highest value,
VII. such as raised it far above every thing in this material world. But they who, enquiring farther, considered its defects also, judged very differently; they beheld mankind plunged in misery, the slaves of extravagant passions, and corrupted with vice. What the others esteemed the excellency of our nature, in their opinion, renders it more wretched: It is unhappy, by seeking after happiness which can never be attained; it hath a restless desire of knowledge, yet is condemned to perpetual ignorance; loves truth, yet is for ever mistaken; admires virtue, and is abandoned to vice; too vain to acknowledge its weakness, it is too quick-sighted not to discern it, and lies under the perpetual uneasiness of perceiving that it was designed for something which it never can arrive to.

Human nature, according to these different lights in which men viewed it, was extolled or depreciated, admired or deplored. But they, who considered it on all sides, who examined most impartially and saw farthest, concluded that it came from the hand of its great Author pure and perfect, and hath since, by some means, been depraved and corrupted. They looked upon its present condition, its mixture of good and evil qualities, as upon the remains of some great fabric, where, even amidst its ruins, we find evident traces of its former beauty and magnificence.

To account for this degeneracy, one sort imagined that God, according to the bounty of his nature,



nature, produced every thing good and perfect; SERM.
but that a contrary principle, independent of him, VII.
and equal in power, at the same instant introduced evil, endeavouring to destroy what he had made, and to corrupt what he preserves; and from the continual struggle between these two opposite powers, they accounted for the mixture of good and evil which is observed in the world: This is the doctrine which prevailed over the whole East; but as it is evidently false, and the contrary of it may be strictly demonstrated, others endeavoured to account for the same appearances in another way.

They supposed, that the souls of men are spirits which had existed before in another life, but, having lost their native purity, were precipitated into mortal bodies, condemned to suffer as a punishment, the miseries and frailties inseparable from our state here. This also is a conjecture void of probability, and manifestly repugnant to experience, since we cannot discover in our minds the least footsteps of any former existence.

How then shall we judge for ourselves? We find that there is nothing here which can satisfy us. Doomed to perish in a few years, we pant after immortality. Condemned to ignorance and polluted with vice, we were certainly designed for knowledge and virtue. Whence came this corruption, this disorder? Reason, we see, never could explain it; and yet it seems necessary to know the cause of our disease, that we may be able to remove it. We must therefore have re-

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course

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VII.

course to Revelation, and if we can derive from it a clear account of this point, as far as it may be necessary to the end proposed, we shall have a strong proof of the excellency and usefulness of the revelation, and, from the knowledge of our condition, discover how it may be improved.

Now this we find done for us in the history which the Scriptures contain of the creation and transgression of our first parents, of the evils following from that transgression upon them and their posterity, and the remedy which the goodness of God provided for those evils; the particulars of which are so well known, that I need not transcribe them in this place.

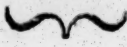
But as this doctrine of original sin, as it is commonly and very improperly named, is in its true notion of great and fundamental use in religion, so is it liable to be misunderstood, and men have fallen into dangerous errors concerning it. I shall therefore endeavour, in the following discourse, to lay before you as clear an account of this important subject as I can, and to vindicate the divine justice in this dispensation. And here give me leave to observe, that although practical doctrines should be chiefly insisted upon from this place, yet enquiries of the kind now before us seem to be sometimes necessary. For in such points as have occasioned great divisions among Christians, it is highly proper that we should see on which side the greater probability lies. One caution, however, should be strictly attended to, that contented with fixing our own belief on the best grounds, we should be very mild and moderate
to

to those who dissent from us, ever remembering SERM.
that the great end of our holy religion, is to VII.
make men virtuous and charitable, not curious
disputants and subtile reasoners.

In order to the apprehending more clearly what follows, it may be useful to observe, *first*, That whatsoever opinion contradicts our natural notions of God and his attributes, never can be admitted as true, because it contradicts demonstration; and it is impossible for us, upon any authority whatsoever, to believe that which we are assured is false.

Secondly; When any doctrine appears, upon strict examination, to be true, we are so far to admit and rest upon it, although in other respects it should be obscure, and liable to doubts that we cannot solve, which is the case in the objects of natural knowledge as well as in points of religion; for there is in all something unknown as well as something known. Thus, in the matter before us, if the account we give of what is called original sin, be agreeable to Scripture, to reason, and experience, we should assent to it so far, though in other points questions may be started to which we cannot give full answers; as, why God laid that command which is recorded in Scripture upon *Adam*? Why he punished him in the particular way he did? How immortality could be consistent with the frame of the human body, or the œconomy of this earth, which requires a succession of perishable inhabitants? With

SERM. many others of the like sort, not possible nor necessary, perhaps not useful, for us to know.

VII.  This being premised, it is easy to see the error of those, who maintain that the crime of our first ancestor involves all his posterity, that his guilt is transmitted to us, and we are actually partakers in it. This opinion contradicts the justice and veracity of God; for how can we be charged with the guilt of an action committed many ages before we were in being? In order to this, we must suppose God to determine that to be our action to which we could not in any sort contribute; an opinion, which implying error or injustice in Him, must be false.

Farther; There cannot be a transgression without a law, nor can a law unknown oblige; infants or persons not in being cannot have the knowledge of a law, and therefore cannot transgress; of consequence are not liable to punishment from Almighty God, who is invariably just and good.

But it is said, that as *Adam* was the common parent of mankind, his posterity are involved in his crime. Yet how may this be? None can be guilty, but so far as he commits or consents to a crime, so that the sin of a father cannot be imputed to a son wholly unconcerned in it; and God accordingly declares in Scripture, that *man shall be judged not by his father's, but his own deeds*. Besides, since the soul, which alone can sin, alone feels punishment, is not derived from our earthly parent, but infused immediately by God the Father
of

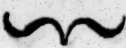
of spirits, how shall it contract actual guilt merely from the guilt of an earthly parent?

SERM.
VII.

But doth not the same kind of proceeding obtain place in human laws? Is not the son punished for the offence of the father, as in high treason? It is true; but observe, that the cases differ widely with respect both to the lawgiver and the punishment. Men are obliged to make laws not absolutely the best, but the best which times and circumstances admit, the best for the whole, though sometimes inconvenient to a part: Our imperfect state renders these partial evils unavoidable. It is not so with the Supreme Lawgiver, who is Lord over all, limited neither by time, place nor circumstance.

As to the punishment, *that* under the supposition now argued against, is not, like the case alleged, a partial, but universal evil, not affecting one family or nation, but all mankind; there is not exempted any part that might receive warning, and profit by the example of this severity, which never can return. Besides, the punishments bear no proportion. What do human laws inflict upon a son for the most heinous crimes of a father? Loss of a title, estate, possessions, never death: Whereas, here the punishment is the greatest imaginable, death temporal and eternal; wherefore the cases are by no means parallel.

Notwithstanding the clearness of these arguments, a numerous sect of Christians at present do, in consequence of this false opinion, maintain that infants who die before baptism, are actually guilty of their first parent's disobedience, and suffer the

SERM. the eternal punishment of condemned souls. But,
VII.  that innocent creatures, who have just begun to breathe, who perish upon the threshold of life, should, by the sentence of a just and merciful Creator, be doomed to everlasting misery, is a doctrine so monstrous and shocking, that it is wonderful how any man could ever give credit to it: The very proposal of it strikes horror, the belief of it, if possible, is a violence done to our nature, and wounds our hearts while it stifles our reason.

Rejecting, therefore, this opinion as impious and false, what judgment shall we form of those who think the evil influence of *Adam's* transgression upon us, to consist herein, that our nature is so entirely and essentially corrupted, that it is impossible for us to lead virtuous lives, and we are forced, by an irresistible necessity, into sin. But if this were so, the consequence must be, that we should not be at all accountable for our actions, nor justly punishable for any fault; for where there is not liberty there cannot be disobedience. Nay, in this case we should not be the authors of our own actions; the author of our nature would be the sole agent: So this opinion, as impiously attributing the sins of mankind to their great Creator, must be false.

Having obviated these dangerous mistakes concerning original sin, it remains that we should enquire wherein it really consists.

Our first parents were created pure, but as being free and fallible, they were liable to sin. By transgressing God's command they were shut
out

out from Paradise; they, and from them their whole posterity, became mortal, subject to diseases and pain, more frail, more exposed to temptation, more liable to sin, than otherwise they would have been. The history in the Scripture relates no more than this; and the text, and some other parallel passages which seem, and have been understood, to imply more, if rightly considered, will be found to extend no farther. *For as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, even so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* That is, as Adam by his transgression became mortal, so likewise all his posterity, who are themselves also sinners, are mortal. The same Apostle says, *As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive:* Or, As Adam's disobedience rendered him and us mortal, so by Christ's merit and sufferings we become capable of obtaining immortal life. Thus in other places it is said, *That the wicked go astray from the womb; that they are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin; that their malice is bred in them.* By which and the like expressions no more is meant, than that they were so entirely corrupt, that their wickedness seemed to have been part of their nature; and this is plain from hence, that the same kind of expression is applied to virtue also, which is not supposed to have been derived to us from our first parent. Thus Job, describing his own charitable disposition, saith, *I have guided the widow from my mother's womb. The fear of the Lord, saith Solomon, is the beginning of wisdom, and was created with the faithful in the womb.* That is, such persons are as constantly and uniformly good,

SERM. good, as if virtue were necessary to them, and
 VII inherent in their nature. *We are by nature the*
children of wrath, saith St. Paul; by which he doth
 not mean that we are born into the world objects
 of God's displeasure, a dispensation cruel and un-
 just; but the sense is, that the *Gentiles*, to whom
 he addresses his discourse, had so entirely and uni-
 versally corrupted their manners before the reve-
 lation of the Gospel, that vice was become, in
 some measure, natural to them. This is evident-
 ly the sense from the context, *among whom*, that is,
among which Gentiles, we all had our conversation in
times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires
of the flesh, and were by nature the children of wrath,
even as others; and you be both quickened by the Gospel,
who were dead in trespasses and sins. This is the Scrip-
 ture doctrine concerning original sin. And now,
 towards clearing the point before us, nothing re-
 mains, but that we should show it thus understood,
 to be agreeable to the Justice of God, for this is
 the great difficulty which hath been urged with
 more weight against this doctrine; and the fol-
 lowing observations will, I believe, furnish a sa-
 tisfactory answer to it.

First; It seems that it would not have been in-
 consistent with the Justice of God to have formed
 creatures, such originally as we now are. For
 as Being is the free gift of God, he may certain-
 ly grant it with such conditions as he thinks fit,
 provided that he do not make any creature finally
 and of necessity miserable, or judge him by laws
 which he cannot obey. He may therefore create
 rational

rational accountable Beings of various orders and endowed with as different degrees of perfections as he pleases. To say, that because he is good, and pleased with communicating happiness, he must make all absolutely perfect and happy, is to assert, that he must endow all his creatures with the excellence of his own divine nature, that is in effect, that he hath it not in his power to make any creature at all; for absolute perfection and happiness belong to God alone. Now why, amidst an amazing variety of intelligent beings of different orders, there should not be such a rank as man now possesseth, a creature of just his degree of imperfection, no reason can be assigned, and therefore God might, agreeably to his Justice, have created man originally as he now is.

SERM.
VII.

Secondly; This being admitted, it follows still more clearly, that our present condition is consistent with the Justice of God, if we were at first created more perfect, and this degenerate state proceeds entirely from the disobedience of our first ancestor. For, according to this account of things, the disadvantages we now labour under from the fall, are of the same kind with those commonly observed in life, which vicious parents entail upon their innocent offspring, as a broken fortune and distempered body; evils often bitter and grievous, yet such as no wise man ever thought a reasonable objection against Providence. So that if these disadvantages, considered absolutely in themselves, are consistent with the Justice of God, they are rendered still more clearly reconcilable

SERM. concilable to it by this additional consideration,
VII. that they were at first laid as a punishment upon
our first parent, and are continued to us according to the established course of things here.

But let us examine into the matter somewhat more particularly. The disadvantages derived from the fall are mortality and frailty, or a greater liableness to sin than we should otherwise have lain under. Now as life was the free gift of God to *Adam*, he might have assigned to it what duration he pleased. He, indeed, of his great Bounty, seems to have designed that *Adam* should be immortal, but with this condition, that if he broke through the single command given him, he should die. Thus far is most equitable. Man, the new creature, disobeys: That instant then, he became justly liable to death; so that if his life had been taken away at that moment it was rightfully forfeited, his posterity never could have existed. God, it is true, was pleased mercifully to suspend the sentence, and to permit that posterity might come into the world. Thus the offence of our first father, if strict justice had been executed upon him, must have prevented our being at all; and ought we to complain because the sentence has been mitigated, and has had an effect less severe, because it hath limited and subjected to mortality, a life which it was to have totally prevented?

Again; We have become more liable to temptation and sin. But were not angels liable to temptation, and some of them cast out from
Heaven

Heaven for yielding to it? Were not our first pa-
rents made liable to sin, and they sunk under it? SERM.
VII.

Nay, it seems that every free creature, however perfect, must be in some sort liable to temptation; for there cannot be obedience where there is no possibility of disobedience, nor reward where there is no room for merit: God alone from the unchangeable rectitude of his nature, is free from all possibility of error; he may therefore form creatures in different degrees subject to sin and error, if he suits the duty of each rank to its powers, if he requires no greater perfection from each than it is capable of attaining. Man hath not the excellence of an angel; neither is the obedience of an angel required from him. We have not such faculties as our first parents were created with, neither is the same purity demanded from us. We are indeed liable to temptation and sin, but we are assured that we have a good and merciful Judge, who knoweth all our infirmities, who will make sufficient allowances for our weakness and frailty, which takes away all charge of injustice herein.

Thirdly; Notwithstanding the fall of man, the condition of our nature is not so bad as it is often represented to be. The weakness of which we complain so loudly, the ignorance and error which prevail so universally, the manifold distresses under which we labour, are by no means the necessary consequences of our natural condition, but chiefly the effects of our own vices, of the voluntary abuse and misapplication of those talents

SERM. talents with which we are endowed. Nature,
VII. however, corrupted, unless depraved by evil habits, does not recommend vice as amiable; on the contrary, we have a natural love of virtue and abhorrence of vice; so that it is our own fault if we do not avoid most of the crimes we daily commit. As to the miseries by which human life is so dreadfully oppressed, we may trace them to the same inexhaustible source, the follies and vices of mankind. Are not most of the hardships which those of the lower rank groan under, produced by the oppression and avarice of those above them, or by their own malice and dishonesty? Do not the rich and powerful involve themselves in a multitude of unnecessary evils, by vanity, ambition and luxury? How often do we bring diseases upon ourselves? How many of the most painful and incurable would probably never have existed, if intemperance had not given birth to them? Our lives are indeed shortened by our ancestor's transgressions, but we, by our luxury, add new rigour to the sentence, and cut them yet more short; for of the many untimely deaths which happen daily, how few are there, strictly speaking, natural? Now in computing the ill effects of original sin, we are to consider only the evil which would remain in the world if we made a right use of the powers we have, not the evil which flows from the abuse of them, for that is a corruption, not from nature, but from our own free act. Suppose then, that instead of malice, revenge and covetousness, charity, beneficence and humanity were universally practised; that
men,

men, instead of being fraudulent, self-interested SERM.
and ambitious, were sincere in their friendships, VII.
honest in commerce, moderate in their private
desires, and zealous for the public good; I ask,
would not the state of the world be very different
from what it now is? Would not life, notwithstanding
the necessary calamities incident to it, be very tolerable,
and its absolute happiness greatly outweigh its misery? From
whence it is manifest, that the evils derived from the first
original sin of *Adam* are much less than they are commonly
said to be. It is still in our power to live happily; God is
just and bountiful; it is our perverseness which corrupts his
gift, and embitters the sweet his Goodness bestows.

There is a *fourth* consideration, which puts this matter
beyond all doubt, and leaves not the least apparent ground
for objection against the divine Justice. What if in reality
we are not sufferers by *Adam's* transgression? What if, immediately
after the crime was committed, on the instant that sentence
was pronounced upon the offender and his posterity, a promise
was added of restoring them to life and immortality? We have
seen this promise fulfilled, the whole wonderful method in
which it was accomplished has been laid open to us, a method
of such infinite love to mankind as adds new value to the
gift. We are still capable of living for ever in happiness
vastly superior to that of an earthly paradise, in Heaven,
in the company of angels and blessed Spirits, in the glorious
presence of Almighty God. Neither can

SERM. we fail of obtaining this happiness but by incorri-

VII.

gible perverseness; we do not forfeit it as *Adam* did his paradise, by one act of disobedience: To be excluded from it, we must live in continued rebellion, we must be ungrateful after the highest benefits received, deaf to the tenderest calls of mercy, not to be wrought upon by the most gracious offers of assistance; we must live in a course of hardened wickedness, die obstinate and impenitent. Where then is the corruption of our nature? We are mortal; but we know that it is in our power to live for ever in a region where sorrow and pain cannot come: We are liable to sin; but God will forgive the repenting sinner: We are frail and weak; but there is an Almighty arm stretched out to support and strengthen us.

The sum of what hath been said is this: The guilt of our first parent's transgression is not imputed to us; neither is our nature become so corrupted by it, that we are under a necessity of sinning. But it has by natural consequence derived to us these evils, exclusion from paradise, mortality, pain and diseases, and extraordinary liability to temptation and sin. Yet this dispensation in no sort contradicts the Justice of God; because, he might have formed creatures originally such as we now are; because our nature still tends to virtue, and if we followed its direction, we might still live well and happily; because God will make allowance for our infirmities: And lastly, because he hath provided a most full and sufficient remedy for

for all these evils of the first original sin, in the SERM.
revelation of the Gospel by our Lord Jesus Christ. VII.

What use shall we make of these reasonings and reflections? Shall we go on in blind and desperate despondence, in complaining of our condition of innate and invincible corruption, in impiously and unjustly accusing the Providence of God? Or rather, shall we not endeavour to deserve and obtain that good which he hath set before us? Shall we not apply ourselves to revive and cultivate the good principles and instincts of our nature, which thoughtlessness, folly and vice have so depressed, and sometimes almost wholly extinguished? Ought we not, instead of murmuring against our Creator, to return thanks for his Goodness, to acknowledge his Justice, and humbly to revere and admire the adorable depth of his Mercy? Ought we not to impress upon our minds a true sense of the dignity, as well as of the weakness of our nature, and instead of grovelling in the pollution of mean and sensual vices, aspire to that Heaven which we are invited to enjoy; and labour to adorn our souls with those virtues, which shall make them flourish for ever, advancing from excellency to excellency, and continuing to brighten through all eternity. Which, that it may be the happy lot of us all, &c.

S E R M O N V I I I .

The evil Tendency of false
Shame.

Preached in Trinity - College Chapel,
Dublin; November 18, 1750.

S T. L U K E ix. 26.

*Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of
him shall the Son of Man be ashamed.*

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VIII.

THESE words may be understood to signify in general, that whosoever lives in the transgression of that law, which our Lord hath delivered to us, shall be disowned and rejected by him at the last day, when he shall come to judge the world. This is plainly the sense of a parallel passage in St. Matthew; *Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.* But the expression in the text seems to contain something more particular, and may be understood more strictly thus: That whoever, through regard to wicked men, to gain their favour and comply with their evil inclinations,

inclinations, more especially to avoid their cen-
sure and reproaches, shall live in a course of wic-
kedness, of him our Lord shall be ashamed, that
is, shall disdain to acknowledge, shall reject as re-
probate, at the last judgment, and cut off from
all benefits of his sufferings and intercession. This
severe sentence is therefore pronounced more di-
rectly against vicious shame. From whence we
may conclude, that it is a very criminal disposi-
tion, and one of the most fruitful sources of cor-
ruption among men; a little experience and at-
tention to what passes in the world, may farther
convince us of the truth of this: But because the
subject is of importance, and deserves to be treat-
ed of more at large, I propose, in this discourse,
to lay before you the nature, causes, and ill con-
sequences of this vicious shame, and add some
observations which may be useful in preventing,
or applying a remedy to it.

This I call vicious or false shame, to distinguish
it from that shame which ariseth in us from a
sense of having acted amiss; for this latter being
a principle of virtue, and a preservative from vice,
ought to be sought after with as much care as the
other should be avoided. This good principle,
or *modesty*, as it is properly named, we may de-
scribe to be a virtue conversant about praise
and blame, teaching a due regard to the opinions
of other men concerning us; modesty, therefore,
chuses actions not only as they are good, but
chiefly as they are decent. Reason and religion
in general approve virtue for its intrinsic excel-
lence; modesty considers it more especially as

SERM.
VIII.

SERM. pleasing and beautiful. They condemn vice for
 VIII. its evil, modesty for its deformity ; they prescribe
 ~~~~~ good for itself chiefly, modesty ; from regard to  
 others ; they require the reality, modesty the appearance also ; reason and religion enjoin decency as a part of virtue, modesty recommends virtue as necessary to preserve decency ; they tend principally to make us good, this to make us amiable ; this softens the rigour of strict virtue, and has a delicacy which starts back from the appearance, from even the thought of vice ; for one perfectly modest will have regard to the judgment of his own mind as well as to that of others, and feel the same kind of pain from the consciousness of a guilty thought, which others suffer from the discovery of a bad action ; so that the righteous person avoids vice, because it is pernicious and contrary to the law of God ; the modest, because it is base and unworthy of his nature. When a man hath no longer any degree of this modesty, innocence is lost without resource. Holy Scripture describes hardened sinners under this character, that they *have not any shame, that they know not what it is to blush or be confounded at their crimes.*

Very different from this is the vicious shame we proposed to treat of, by which I mean, that kind of shame that prevents men from doing their duty, when they know and acknowledge it to be their duty. This is the particular notion under which I consider it ; for I do not at present mean to discourse concerning that shame which flows from ignorance or contempt, a principle often met with in profane persons, who not understanding



ing religion, or judging it to be unworthy of their SERM.  
VIII.  
observance, imagine, that it would be ignominious in them to obey its precepts. These are to be referred to another class of sinners, the ignorant or the open unbelievers, and they are to be instructed or convinced by other kind of arguments. The shame I speak of, supposes some knowledge, and even some esteem of virtue: And this very consideration proves how dangerous the effects are which follow from this shame, and of how much importance it is to know and observe them, since it seduces and corrupts those who are not abandoned, and of whom otherwise there would be ground for entertaining good hopes.

Now to comprehend rightly the nature of this evil shame, we should first remark, that shame commonly springs from two causes; sometimes it arises from the nature of the thing, or the opinion we entertain concerning it. Thus it is that men are ashamed of actions in themselves dishonourable, or appearing such to them. Sometimes also, shame is an effect of that regard which we pay to the judgment of mankind; it is for this reason one is ashamed to do those actions which may bring upon him contempt and dishonour in the world. It is evident that vicious shame doth not proceed from the first of these causes: Religion hath nothing in it reproachful; on the contrary, it is the most beautiful, the most honourable of all things, and the most worthy of man; nay such it appears even to him, who, through this vicious shame, dares not obey its laws. The true cause of false shame is therefore to be placed in the re-

SERM, gard we have to the judgment of men, and the  
VIII. fear we are under of laying ourselves open to their  
hatred or contempt: for the truth is, piety is rare  
in the world, is despised, is disregarded in it:  
These are the three chief causes of vicious  
Shame.

Piety, I say, is rare in the world, few love, few  
practise it. Now, man hath a great proneness to  
do that which is commonly done; to go with the  
multitude seems to him the most secure and ho-  
nourable way; he fears to become ridiculous by  
departing from them. It is a general principle,  
that we should follow the fashion, and live as  
others do. Hence it is, that few have courage to  
enlist themselves under the standard of virtue, as  
it is a decayed and abandoned party.

Piety is likewise often despised in the world; it  
is looked upon as something disgraceful and mean.  
The exactness of a man who directs his behaviour  
by the principles of religion and conscience, is  
ascribed to weakness of understanding, to singula-  
rity, to obstinacy, sometimes to hypocrisy and  
pride. They who profess a love to religion are  
made objects of ridicule: On the contrary, it is  
reputed honourable to conform one's self in every  
thing to the humour and manners of the age; false  
and unjust as these opinions are, they have, not-  
withstanding, great and general influence, because  
there are few who have firmness enough to resist  
the judgment of men, and disregard their con-  
tempt: Contempt is of all things the most insup-  
portable to one's self-love. The temptation there-  
fore



fore is powerful, and easily inspires vicious shame, which brings with it an aversion to piety. SERM.  
VIII.

Piety, farther, raises the envy of the world: A good life accuses and condemns those who live ill, nay it covers them with confusion. Besides, religion sometimes enjoins actions which displease and offend others; with whatever prudence or caution it may be attended, there are conjunctures in which it is scarcely possible for it to avoid raising their jealousy, sometimes perhaps even their hatred or resentment. A good man is often under a necessity of refusing their demands; he cannot stoop to that low unworthy complaisance which is too often necessary to gain the love of those he must converse with; for this reason many neglect religion; they dare not display a brightness which discovers the weakness and folly of others; they are persuaded, that not only the laws of civility and good breeding, but even those of prudence, require them not to follow a course of life, which may render them disagreeable or displeasing to the world.

From these reflections we have now made concerning the nature and causes of vicious shame, the truth of what was next to be advanced, its ill consequences, in a great measure appear already, that it is one of the most fruitful sources of corruption among men. We have all, interwoven in our nature, an earnest desire of approbation, and a strong sense of *Shame*: These were intended by our Creator to be assistants to the cause of virtue, deterring us from things base, and inciting us to generous undertakings; which good ends  
accordingly

SERM. accordingly they do answer, so long as they are,  
VIII. what they should be, lower motives of action ;

when they become the chief, are pursued or avoided for themselves, they misguide us, and lead into the worst of crimes. For if I be a person governed absolutely by the love of praise or dread of shame, and observe vice to be universally practised around me, while virtue and its followers are disliked and censured, it is scarcely possible for me, in those circumstances, to escape the infection : I shall adapt my behaviour to their notions and practice, and give up my innocence rather than be shunned and despised. The first corruption of man is most frequently brought about in this way. They cannot bear to be avoided as rigid and precise, to be laughed at by their equals for being odd and singular, and despised as dull and void of spirit. How many good and gentle dispositions have been seduced contrary to their reason and natural bent, by the fear of raillery and contempt ? They are ashamed to persevere in what their companions dislike ; they are unwilling to lag, as it were, behind them, and abandon every thing good, rather than become the objects of an absurd ridicule. For some time they have remorse ; by degrees they become familiar with vice, and contract more boldness in sinning ; the shame of doing well encreases, that of doing ill diminishes ; in a short time they commit habitually and through inclination, that which at first they did seldom, and with inward struggles ; at length they arrive at an open contempt of piety, and, to crown all, erect to themselves a false phantom



phantom of honour, which they are to pursue through profaneness and immorality. When men agree to praise each other for vice, and found their own reputation upon it, all restraints of reason and religion are overturned at once, and the whole deluge of wickedness breaks in upon them. Suppose a profligate person possessed of some accidental advantages, distinguished perhaps by birth, by some little glitter of wit or fortune, if he has had the art or luck to become admired, and, as it often happens in a silly world, to render his vices admired with himself, what multitudes do we see ready to copy after him in his worst qualities? Example, fashion and false shame make the contagion spread, and the party soon grows so strong, that they struggle hard to overthrow the whole order of nature, to bear down the principles of reason and common sense, to brand virtue with infamy, and make vice honourable and glorious. Is it strange that men should become very corrupt, where opinions of this kind prevail, where the power of fashion, custom and applause, recommends and enforces immorality, where to blush is accounted a weakness, and impudence is esteemed a mark of good breeding? Is it just cause of wonder, that dishonesty and oppression should prevail, where it is held a mark of generosity and spirit, to lavish away one's fortune on sin and folly, and then to aggrieve and defraud, to withhold wages from the hireling, and just debts from the artificer? Are temperance and sobriety likely to be much practised, when to live in riot and excess, and perpetual intoxication, to

add

SERM. add feast to feast, and join the morning to the evening, is held the character of a social and honest mind? Can a due sense of the Majesty and Goodness of the Almighty be preserved, where to despise his word, and neglect the day and place set apart for his worship, is the avowed applauded practice? It cannot be denied that errors of these kinds are too much encouraged; that dishonesty in dealing, intemperance, seducing of innocence and irreligion, are not only not abhorred, but often commended, and openly vaunted of. Thus bad men fortify themselves in their iniquity; they have the advantage of numbers; and by setting up false measures of shame and honour, they win over the young, the easy and unwary. They represent knowledge as pedantry, modesty as awkwardness, religion as hypocrisy, conscience as superstition, a veneration of God and his laws as a servile daftardly spirit; with them immorality is true liberty; midnight brawls, courage; a deifying of God and religion, is a free generous spirit.— Mistaken unhappy men! Ye will too soon discover your error: That path which appears so plain and pleasant, ye will soon find intricate and beset with the sharpest thorns; that phantom of honour which ye so eagerly pursue, will lead you among rocks and precipices, then vanishing, leave you covered with infamy and misery. O return whilst ye yet may! Open your eyes to the truth so evident of itself, and attested by the wise and good in all ages, that, whatever the practices and tenets of those about you may be, there is nothing



thing truly honourable but virtue, nothing shameful but vice. SERM.  
VIII.

Vicious shame being a principle thus powerful and exceedingly dangerous, we cannot take too much pains to root it out. Come, say they to the yet uncorrupted, while our health and fortune permit, let us gratify every appetite, sense and passion: Why do you hesitate? Are you also entangled in the snare of conscience and vulgar prejudice? What narrowness of soul! Assert your liberty, shake off these ungentleman-like fetters, the dreams of superstition, and engines of church-policy. To which end it is obvious, that we should, *first*, take care to regulate duly our love of praise and fear of blame: If we make them the only or chiefest ends of our actions, we shall unavoidably fall into all kinds of guilt: for consider how the judgments of mankind are generally grounded; what ignorance, what prejudices they lie under; what rashness, what manifold corruptions! And must it not be the highest imprudence to build one's conduct on a foundation so treacherous and false? At the same time, we are by no means to aim at an absolute indifference to the opinion of the world: For modesty is a strong guard to virtue; it is, as it were, an outwork, which keeps off the approaches of temptations; if you suffer this to be broken through, the other becomes an easy prey. It is a nice and delicate sense of what is evil, by which the soul shrinks back from the appearance of vice; and if this be polluted and worn off, conscience too often becomes hard, and callous, and insensible. Indeed

SERM. a regard to the esteem of others should be always  
 VIII. our aim, where it is not inconsistent with our duty. Besides, without it, even virtue is apt to degenerate, to grow rigid and sour, morose and unamiable, thus losing not only much of its beauty but usefulness; for good men, by being loved, establish an authority; their manners, sentiments, and example, come to have weight, and by that means, help much to check the tide of popular error, and prevent the ill effects of this vicious shame. Hence the rule is, consider virtue as the only thing excellent in itself, applause and reproach, while subservient to it, have value; if set in opposition, are utterly insignificant.

As a farther security against this vice, let us consider, that there is a great deal of mistake and meanness in the sentiments and conduct of those whom this false shame hinders from fulfilling the obligations of religion and conscience. I say, *first*, there is a great deal of mistake in their proceeding. This shame is founded solely in the judgment which the world forms concerning piety; but if they who despise piety are deceived, as they certainly are, if it be folly even in bad men to judge ill of piety, is it not still greater folly in those who are better informed, to give up their own judgment to one which they are assured is false, and to make it the principle of their conduct. If virtue be good, just, agreeable to God, useful to those who practise it, and the surest guide to happiness, why should we be ashamed to practise it? A wise man should esteem that which deserves esteem; and if he see the ignorant or corrupted maintain contrary sentiments, he



he should set himself above their judgment, and despise the contempt of a mistaken multitude. SERM. VIII.  
The judgment of men cannot make what is just unjust, or make unnecessary that which is necessary; it is therefore of no weight, when the point in question is the conduct of our lives and our salvation hereafter. Their esteem or contempt shall not decide our lot; we must read that in the sentence of our own consciences.

There is not only mistake, but great meanness also in this vicious shame. Nothing can be more mean, more unworthy than to abandon the cause of virtue, while conscience prompts us to support it. Not to have resolution enough to do one's duty in these circumstances, is, on the one hand, to submit our knowledge and conscience to the fancies of others, and to depress ourselves below what is most vile in nature; and on the other, it is to have greater regard for men than for God. Can one conceive a conduct more unworthy? Is not this a meanness shameful in a Christian, who is called to the open profession of his religion and faith, who should glory in supporting the interests of truth and justice, in spite of the contradiction and contempt of the world? Is it not with justice that our Lord declares, that he will be ashamed of such persons at the last judgment? Here then is a powerful remedy against false shame, to reflect often and seriously, above all things, on the evidence and importance of religion, to consider, that it proposeth to us infinite goods, but these goods are reserved for them alone who shall have the courage to practise what it enjoins; to think

SERM. think often how valuable a possession is the appro-  
 VIII. bation of one's own conscience ; to impress deep-  
 ~~~~~ ly in our minds this truth, that the judgment of  
 men is of little worth, and that our happiness de-
 pends not on their esteem or contempt.

A *third* method by which we may overcome this shame, is by considering that there is not always the danger we imagine, of incurring the contempt or hatred of men, in doing our duty. Shame, like fear, magnifies objects and dangers. Piety is often despised, I acknowledge, but oftentimes it makes itself respected. Even they who think it strange that any should act differently from themselves, cannot help entertaining in the bottom of their hearts, esteem and reverence for good men. A truly christian behaviour is so far from always exposing to contempt, that they who seek to avoid this contempt, by swerving from their duty, oftentimes bring it upon themselves.

Let us consider, *lastly*, not only the opinion of good men, but of superior spirits ; and raising our views still higher, to the throne of God, let us think what judgment the Infinite Eternal Spirit who governs the universe, formeth concerning us. We know that virtue alone can render us pleasing in his sight ; and what are the scorns, the censure of men, set in opposition to his approbation ? Consider that we all shall be assembled before this great Being, before his Judgment-seat. Then shall our hearts be laid open, and our inmost souls be discovered to the view of men and angels.

gels. What shall support us in this day of terror; SERM
the testimony of a good conscience, or the frivo- VIII.
lous applause of mankind, of the vicious deluded
part of mankind? Then how glorious shall be the
triumph, how great the lustre of despised calum-
niated virtue! Then shall this false shame end in
real lasting confusion; when our Lord shall come
in his own Glory, and in his Father's, and of the
holy Angels; and whosoever shall be ashamed of
him and of his words, of him shall the Son of
Man be ashamed.

The application of what has been said is obvi-
ous. Shame is one of the most powerful of all
motives; many who have resisted every other
passion, have sunk before this. Let us therefore,
my brethren, be vigilant in guarding against the
abuse of it. You who are yet young and inno-
cent, I would more especially exhort you to be-
ware, lest, through inexperience and credulity, you
be misled by it; lest you should make the ordina-
ry practice and maxims of others the sole standard
of your behaviour; and, for the little short-lived
pleasure of being agreeable and commended, give
up your innocence, the most valuable of all posses-
sions. You, who are gentle and easy of disposition,
guard against this flexibility, so pliable to every
wrong influence, beware of making a sacrifice of
your virtue to mere complaisance, and resigning
all true worth for the false praise of good breeding
and politeness. All who have attachments to par-
ticular sets of men, through personal obligations,
near intimacies or dependencies, should be exhort-

SERM. ed, to keep at least their consciences free and independent. Let us all preserve this our right natural and born with us, the liberty of the mind, and scorn to bow our necks to the yoke of opinion, the worst and meanest bondage. Let us endeavour to acquire such strength of mind, as not to bend before every blast of popular rumour, such stability as may enable us to refuse, to resist, to despise, fearing to sin more than to offend, and reverencing God rather than man. Let malice rail, envy asperse, praises allure, wit ridicule; we may, we ought to rise superior, and look down upon them as idle, impotent noise. If we would preserve any justice in our sentiments, veracity in discourse, consistency in behaviour, any peace of conscience, any dignity of character, any worth or true honour; if we would deserve the title of reasonable creatures, of men, of christians, let us, in spite of the charms of friendship or threatenings of enmity, in spite of public opinion or private persuasion, resolve to hold fast our integrity, dare to be singular in the right, and preserve in it steadfast, immovable, above the reach of empty vanity or false vicious shame. Which good resolution. God of his Mercy enable us all to accomplish, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

Advantages of Contentment.

Preached in Trinity - College Chapel,
Dublin; January 23, 1753.

PHILIPPIANS iv. II.

*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to
be content.*

THERE is nothing more earnestly re-
commended to us, nor more valuable in
itself than Contentment. It is not so
properly the foundation upon which happiness
is to be raised, as happiness itself; every one
being so far happy as he is pleased with his con-
dition. On the other hand, there is oftentimes
nothing more dangerous, more hurtful to the
public, more destructive to one's self, than
Contentment. For if every man were perfectly
satisfied with his present state, and should not
seek in any sort to amend it, there would be a
stop put to industry, and all the advantages
springing

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springing from it; as upon the same supposition, misjudging and vicious men never could be set right and reformed. It is therefore of the greatest importance to judge rightly in this point, and distinguish the true from the false Contentment, as our happiness and misery depend upon that distinction.

This I propose to make the subject of the present discourse, which shall proceed in the following method. *First*, To explain the nature of Contentment. *Secondly*, To shew the true grounds upon which alone it can be raised. *Thirdly*, To enquire why it is so rarely found among men: And to conclude with some useful observations.

First; Contentment in general is opposed to desire, especially to that anxiety and uneasiness which attend desires impossible to be gratified. It is natural for us to wish for those good things which we want, from the attainment of which we expect pleasure and advantage: From wishing we are easily led to pursue and endeavour to obtain them; if we be disappointed or discouraged by difficulties that appear unconquerable, we fall into despair, we become sorrowful and wretched.

On the contrary, he is satisfied who is free from desire, who sees nothing which he is very solicitous to acquire. This, however, is but the first step towards Contentment; for if it were the whole of it, stocks and stones, things
inanimate

inanimate and insensible, would be content, because they form no wishes, feel no uneasiness. True satisfaction of mind must be joined with knowledge, and spring from reflection. He therefore is content who hath, or upon examination thinks that he hath, every thing necessary, who beholds nothing unpossessed that he judges worthy of his labouring to attain, or even to desire earnestly.

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Now the first thing which makes this Contentment of mind good or evil, is the truth or falshood of this judgment; for if the judgment be false, and he wants the most necessary goods, the Contentment founded upon it is not only vain and unjust, but also most pernicious, preventing him from seeking that good which he hath not, and which, perhaps, by timely care and industry, he might have obtained. On the other hand, if this judgment be true, it is fit that he should be content, and free himself from those anxieties which rend the hearts of men, who are for ever forming new wishes disproportioned to their wants and abilities, and thus become their own incessant tormentors.

But is this kind of Contentment suited to our condition here? Is not our life subject to innumerable casualities? Are we not surrounded with misfortunes, evils and pain? Do we not fall daily into follies and vices? How then is this satisfaction consistent with such a state? It seems wholly adapted to one much happier, it is a good too exquisite to be tasted any where

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but in Heaven; it is therefore a perfection not attainable nor required from us here.

Perfect absolute satisfaction, freedom from every wish, every desire, seems indeed too perfect happiness for the frail condition of mortal life; but neither is it required in the virtue we now treat of. There is a lower degree of Contentment, which consists in a general acquiescence in our present state, and shuts out only certain desires, certain sorts of uneasiness, suffering others in some degree still to subsist: This is possible to be attained here, and this it is which is often recommended to us in Holy Scripture, as in the text, *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* And again, St. Paul says. *Let your manners be without covetousness, being content with that which ye have.* And in another place he says, *Godliness with content is great gain.*

The particular limits of this duty will appear more distinctly from what shall be said hereafter. Let us now proceed to enquire what are the true grounds upon which alone this Contentment can be founded.

If we were to be determined in this enquiry by the general practice of the world, we should certainly fix it in those goods which are almost universally admired and pursued. Let us consider then, shall we find Contentment in riches and honours? History and the constant experience of mankind attest the contrary: They are so far from making the owner happy, that they expose

expose him to perpetual vexations and disappointments. The malice of rivals, the revenge of enemies, the uncertainty of human affairs, continually alarm him, and the pursuits he is engaged in, make him the prey of unlimited and restless passions. But perhaps we shall meet with this desire of all hearts in the flowery paths of pleasure. Alas! those flowers conceal venomous adders that sting to death; those paths lead to diseases, poverty and shame. But not to dwell too long on particulars, we may assert in general, that all vicious persons are destitute of the most necessary knowledge. They have neither clearness of reason, integrity of heart, nor innocence of life. They are the objects of God's displeasure; they are the slaves of ungoverned appetites; for as many vices, as many passions as they have, so many are the chains which fetter and bind them down to obey the most cruel tyrants. Unhappy here, they have the dreadful expectation of endless misery hereafter. Thus all things round about them present scenes of terror and dismay; nor can they be wholly ignorant of their evil state, whatever pains they may take to keep off the sense of their danger, by shutting out reflection.

We may add farther, that the more contented they are, the less reason they have to be so. for if they had regret and remorse, there might be some hope of their amendment; they might seek for, and succeed in finding out, a remedy for evils so grievous; but is it probable,

SERM. that they will take pains to deliver themselves

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from a state which they esteem happy? Will they seek to apply remedies to evils which they do not feel? Will they labour to acquire goods which they think themselves already possessed of, or look upon as useless? Nay, those very outward advantages upon which they found their happiness, if they judged rightly, they would see to be the source of their misery. They are so many temptations which entangle them more strongly in the snares of vice, and bring the divine wrath upon them. The greater part of their crimes springs from the desire of obtaining or preserving these false goods, or from the abuse of them; so that they are the principal cause of their destruction.

Vice, therefore, however flourishing, cannot afford true Contentment: It remains, that it can be acquired only by the practice of religion and virtue. This is the chief and great point, worthy of your most serious attention, and therefore deserves to be enlarged upon: The following observations will, I think, make it evident.

Nothing is so opposite to Contentment as a persuasion that we have not the good which we deserve. They who think thus are properly stiled discontented; as on the other hand, he is satisfied who esteems his condition suitable to his deserts. This being so, the pious man must be also contented, for piety is always attended with humility, a necessary part of every virtuous character;

character; and certain it is, that whoever has humility, must think his state here better than he deserves. Our Lord tells us that *we are all*, the best of us, *unprofitable servants*, and indeed it is evident from common reason. For what title have we to those blessings which our Almighty Creator hath, of his free bounty, bestowed upon us? How just is the small tribute of obedience which he requires from us in return? And how imperfectly is it paid by us? Examine your own characters; look into your hearts: Are we not continually falling into sin and folly, transgressing the laws of God and the dictates of our own reason? Is it therefore fit that we should murmur against God, and, miserable sinners as we are, demand more gifts, more favours? Or rather, is it not his infinite, inexhaustible mercy alone which bears with our ingratitude, which continues to us blessings that we go on in abusing, and suspends the punishment our vices justly provoke? These are not the lessons of a profound or extraordinary humility; the most ordinary cannot fail of producing these sentiments in us. If we would only take a little pains to know ourselves, if we would open our eyes upon our crimes and follies, we must acknowledge that God is just and merciful, and good, and that our condition is much better than we deserve.

It is therefore unquestionably true, that the man who is endowed with piety, hath always reason to be contented. The argument will be
yet

SERM, yet stronger, if we consider, that among these
IX. undeserved advantages which he possesses, there

are some exceedingly valuable. May we not reckon it one of this sort, that he is assured of the remission of his sins, that his repentance will be accepted of, that he shall be exempted from the wrath of God, and all the dreadful consequences of it here and hereafter? An inestimable advantage, which made *David* cry out, *Happy are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; yea, blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin.*

What can be more desirable than to be reconciled to God, to be delivered from that miserable state of war with him, in which sin had engaged us, the effects of which must have been infinitely fatal to us? What is more desirable than to be objects of the love and favour of God, to be assured that his bounty is always open to us, that he is ever ready to protect and pour out his benefits upon us? What can be a more valuable blessing, than to have an undoubted right to all the happiness and glory of Heaven, and to enjoy, as it were, a foretaste of it in the ease and satisfaction of mind springing from the consciousness of virtue, and a well-grounded expectation of an happy immortality?

Now suppose one who is heir of this hope, to be destitute of all things which the world admires; suppose him without pleasures, ease, honours, reputation; suppose him despised, persecuted,

secuted, without friends, without support; I say, that all the goods which he wants, do yet bear a small proportion to those which he possesseth.

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The former are often imaginary goods, sometimes pernicious; these are real and always useful: The former are at best good to the body only; these bring inestimable benefits to the soul: The former are included within the narrow bounds of this life; these reach to the whole extent of eternity. From whence it appears, that the pious man, though destitute of all outward goods, has reason to be content, as always possessing others incomparably more valuable.

Our argument is yet capable of farther evidence, for we may add, that the righteous have reason to be content, not only as possessing very excellent goods, but because they never want any which are truly necessary for them: I say truly, for they may, and often do, want many things necessary in the opinion of the world, which are in truth sometimes hurtful, often superfluous, almost always not necessary. A few observations will make this clear.

And *first*, it is to be remarked, that among the means leading to ends, we confound two which are very different, the useful and the necessary. Those are useful which probably lead to the end; but the necessary are those which alone lead to it, without which the end cannot be attained.

Observe

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Observe *farther*, that there are two sorts of ends, the chief or last, which is happiness, and this men of all ranks, of every age and temper, propose to themselves; the others are called near or secondary ends, which are ends with respect to some means, and means with respect to the chief end. Thus men labour to acquire riches in order to be happy; here riches are a means to happiness, and an end with regard to labour.

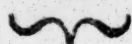
Observe, *lastly*, that these near or secondary ends are not always, what they are supposed to be, proper means for procuring the chief end: They are often useless, often improper, sometimes instruments destructive of that end: Whence it comes to pass, that what is necessary for obtaining this secondary end, is by no means necessary for arriving at the last end: For instance, deceit and fraud may in some cases be necessary to gain riches, the immediate end; but they can never be useful in obtaining the last end, happiness; on the contrary, they are certainly destructive of it, as it cannot consist with vice.

Now let us apply these distinctions to the point before us. It is acknowledged that a religious man may be destitute of many things necessary for obtaining subordinate immediate ends; but it is at the same time true, that he never wants any thing necessary for arriving at the last great end, happiness.

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The religious man may want innumerable things necessary to gratify his passions; but the gratification of his passions is by no means necessary to make him happy. The religious man may want many things necessary to recommend him to the esteem of the public, and raise a splendid character; but one may be happy without honour, esteem or glory. The religious man may want necessaries for the support of life, may die through want and hunger; but life is not necessary to happiness; this may be enjoyed after death, in the very pangs of death. Certainly nothing is necessary to happiness, but to love and be beloved of God, to obey his laws, to live in his favour, and the hope of possessing it for ever. Temporal goods are indeed useful means of happiness, but never necessary; they are sometimes opposite to it; and the children of God may be assured, that in cases where those goods are denied to them, they are of this latter sort, they would be hurtful to them; for undoubtedly a Being of infinite Goodness withholds nothing from those he loves, but for their final advantage. And this leads to a farther remark, with which I shall close this head.

Good men want nothing but what it is their interest that they should want, and this is a farther reason for their being content. It cannot be denied, that there are many useful goods which it is our interest not to possess, because they are inconsistent with greater goods. Thus
there

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there are losses which enrich, and disgraces that bring honour. And this is the case of the pious man. Wealth, reputation, health, life, are undoubtedly useful; yet it is sometimes an advantage to him that he is deprived of these. It is an advantage to lose his fortune and possessions, as it may wean him from an over-fondness for the enjoyments here, and fix his mind upon another and better life. It is an advantage to be blackened by calumny; *Blessed are you, saith our Lord, when men shall revile and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil of you for my sake; rejoice and have exceeding joy, for great is your reward in Heaven.* It is an advantage to be afflicted; to this purpose the Psalmist saith, *It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.* Even Death is advantageous, as it delivers him from a frail miserable life, and translates him to regions of endless bliss: *We wish, saith the Apostle, to be removed from this body, that we may be with the Lord.* Indeed, whoever believes that all things are governed by the Providence of God, and that virtue is the only means by which we can obtain his favour, must acknowledge, that temporal goods can be denied to the virtuous for no other reason, but because it must be their true interest that they should be denied; for as he is all-powerful and bountiful, if he withhold any good thing from those he loves, it must be as a means of obtaining for them some greater good.

What

What hath been hitherto delivered, is so clear and incontestable, that it is justly matter of surprise to find men so inattentive to it; for if they did attend, they would not be so generally discontented as they are, for ever panting after some absent good, and uneasy in disappointment. Whence is this, a disposition as unreasonable as afflicting?

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One cause is, that we have none or little faith. If we firmly believed what I have now laid before you, which is the doctrine every where and at large taught in the Gospel, we should be satisfied with our condition, and cease to torment ourselves with restless desires; we should look upon it as the dispensation of a wise and indulgent Providence, and this consideration would alone suffice to render us content with it. But we do not proceed in this manner; we either disbelieve the great truths of the Gospel, or perhaps assent slightly to them, without reflecting upon them with the care necessary to give them due weight and influence.

Thus our faith is feeble, and accordingly we do not direct our behaviour by the rules and precepts of faith. Thus we lose all rule of action, or take for a rule, passion, which is raised, not by the light of truth, but partly by opinion and prejudice, partly by the blind instincts of our nature. By the former of these we are taught to look upon pleasure as the most desirable, riches as the most useful, power as the most glorious, of all things: By the others we
are

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are strongly inclined to and fond of them; a strong bias within urgeth us to love and pursue them. Is it therefore strange that we should be uneasy when we pursue them in vain?

Farther; We are ignorant of our true interest: We imagine it to consist in the enjoyment of whatever we like, and in an exemption from every thing disagreeable; we judge of all things according to this standard; and, as we must want many things necessary to this interest, we are of course exposed to perpetual uneasiness. In the mean time we never consider, that we have an interest distinct from, and vastly superior to this, that of our salvation: Whatever contradicts this latter, although it promote the other, is most pernicious; whatever advances this, although it contradict the other, is most highly useful; so that nothing should afflict us but what tends to the prejudice of our eternal welfare; nothing but what contributes to it give us real joy. If then we would remove all our anxiety, if we would obtain as far as the condition of our nature will admit, full Contentment of mind, let us fix deeply in our minds these four indisputable truths.

That the salvation of our souls is our chief and great interest, the only necessary one to which all others bear no proportion.

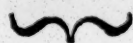
That Providence governs the world, and produces every event here, sin only excepted.

That

That this Providence is infinitely wise, knowing, much better than we do, what is good and evil, useful and hurtful to us.

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That this Providence is perfectly just and good, approving, loving virtue, and consulting its advantage more certainly than man can do.

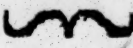
If we were firmly persuaded of these truths, and reflected seriously upon them, what is it that could discompose us? Events the most opposite to our inclinations could no longer disturb us; we should look upon them as the dispensations of a good and wise Governor, and therefore, however seemingly adverse, tending to our final advantage. Thus we should resign ourselves to his will, and, even in adversity, find matter of praise and thanksgiving.

Thus we have seen what Contentment is, and have traced out the method in which it may be acquired. We have seen that this divine inhabitant resides in those breasts alone which devotion hath warmed and religion purified. We behold the numbers who seek after her in the ways of vice, following a delusion which for ever disappoints them, passing from hope to hope, from scheme to scheme, incessantly toiling to remove the present uneasiness, and only changing it for a new; like persons who languish upon the bed of sickness, they toss from side to side, try every posture and different situation, but the disease still continues within, and

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they

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they tire themselves with vain efforts, incapable of healing it or deceiving their pain. Ask the most successful in their crimes, have you obtained the happiness you expected from success? They must acknowledge that they have not. Consult your own reason, consult the holy oracles of God, what the end of those men shall be: Both answer, final misery and destruction. Consider this point seriously, fix it deeply, engrave it in your minds. You have the road to happiness pointed out clearly to you; why will you obstinately shut your eyes and turn another way?

But you will say, How wretched is the condition of human nature! Much the greater part of mankind are vicious, and by this account, therefore, miserable. We wander through this life as through a vast wilderness, broken into precipices, and traversed by impetuous floods: Suppose that we should find a path in which we were certain of going on securely, could we be at ease and satisfied, while the cries of wretches who perish round about us, ring in our ears? If piety doth not extinguish humanity, though we should have in ourselves the materials of content, we must be miserable while our fellow-creatures are so. It is true, good men have in all ages deplored the corruption and distresses of mankind; these are the just objects of concern and compassion; but if this concern becomes so great as to destroy the Contentment before described, or to render us murmurers against the
Providence

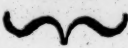
Providence which permits these evils and confusion, it is then highly criminal; for we should reason in this manner:

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God is invariably just and good; whatever, therefore, he ordains or permits, is for just and wise ends. We indeed cannot see into his councils, we cannot comprehend the whole system of his Providence; we behold but a small part, and that imperfectly. To conclude, therefore, that every thing is what it appears to us, to pronounce from our ignorance against the Justice of the infinite Governor of the universe, is most unreasonable as well as impious. But truth is despised, integrity trod upon, the Deity blasphemed, religion ridiculed, vices publickly honoured; can we see this without indignation, sorrow, discontent? Grant this were the case, suppose the worst; doth not the Almighty, who is most pure, most wise, see and suffer this? Are we more pure, more wise?

Let us therefore, my brethren, laying aside such vain presumption, labour each in his sphere to lessen this confusion by a faithful discharge of his duty; and those errors we cannot amend, those punishments we cannot avert, let us look upon as the dispensations of an Almighty hand, that permits and ordains every thing for the best, which as it brought light out of darkness, will produce regularity and order from confusion. Let us pity the sufferings, while we condemn the blindness of the guilty; but beware of arraigning the conduct of the Most High. Let

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us wait with patience and entire resignation to his will, till that day arrive in which the whole order of his dispensations shall be laid open and fully justified in the sight of men and angels. Let us, confiding in his Mercy and acquiescing in his Wisdom, prepare ourselves to appear in that awful hour before his judgment-seat, without confusion of face and terror of heart, that we may be received into those regions, in which alone true and absolute Contentment is to be found.

In the mean time let us be assured, as reason demonstrates, that however appearances may puzzle our weak understandings, infinite Wisdom cannot err, infinite Justice cannot injure, infinite Goodness cannot oppress. Here let us fix our foot, and in all events cry out with the Son of God ever-blessed, *O Lord, not what I will, but what thou wilt, be done.*

SERMON

S E R M O N X.

Benefits of an early virtuous
Education.

Preached at St. Bridget's, Dublin;
February 9, 1752.

E P H E S I A N S VI. 4.

*Bring up your Children in the Nurture and
Admonition of the Lord.*

ON former occasions of this kind, I endeavoured to explain the nature, obligation and excellence of charity, its limits, and the best manner of exercising it; give me leave, at present, to turn your thoughts another way, to a duty different indeed, yet closely connected with the design now in view, I mean the education of children, enjoined in the text.

SERM.
X.



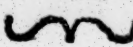
And because this duty extends itself to persons of every rank, in treating of it, I shall, *first*, lay before you some general reflections concerning the usefulness of a right education. I propose,

L 3

pose,

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SERM. pose, *next*, to point out briefly the best and most

X. necessary kind of education, that which is pre-
 scribed in the text. And *lastly*, I shall make
some application to the present opportunity.

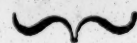
Concerning the *first* of these, the usefulness of education, much need not be said, it being a truth obvious to the common reason of mankind, and indeed acknowledged by all. However the importance of the subject may, it is hoped, justify the following short observations.

Between the natural state of brutes and men, there is this wide difference, that in the great articles of life, in defending themselves, providing sustenance, and bringing up their young, brutes discover marks of great sagacity; but these marks are universal; they are constant in every sort, and the same in each individual, not reaching beyond those articles, nor improvable by experience; whence we look upon them as impressions immediately from the Author of Nature, independent of the creatures themselves. Whereas reason, the governing power of the human mind, is different in different persons, is applicable to every occurrence, and depends likewise very much on our own care. By cultivation it arrives to extraordinary force; neglected, becomes strangely feeble. This spark which blazeth out sometimes into a divine lustre, is quickly extinguished, unless nourished by the fuel of good arts, and excited by continual industry.

dustry. Hence the necessity of education; man uneducated is in a worse state than brutes; he has neither their instinct nor his own reason.

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Again; Passions grow up of themselves; it is the office of reason to check their luxuriant growth. Neglect both; reason never acquires strength, passion too much. Hence the balance is broken, the soul, without its governor, is all confusion.

Add hereto; That man is active: He must be employed; if not set to learn good, he will learn evil; custom confirms, fixes him in it; every day makes a reformation more difficult.

From hence appears the usefulness of infusing good principles into the mind, of forming it to early habits of virtue and diligence, of giving it that first bias to good, necessary to preserve it afterwards amidst the many temptations to evil with which the world abounds.

Would you see these arguments verified by fact? What is it that distinguisheth nations? Why is one bloody, savage, barbarous; another civilized, polished, humane? Arts and education make the difference. Take particular men, one carefully brought up, adorned with every talent and virtue; another totally neglected, rude and untaught: What unlikeness! They scarcely seem of the same kind. Or, what is more affecting, cast your eyes on the lowest rank among ourselves,

L 4

whom

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SERM. whom want hath shut out from the advantage
X. of early education; how rude are their notions!

How unpolished their manners! How gross their ignorance! The point therefore is evident; the worth, excellence, happiness of mankind, depend chiefly upon their being brought up aright. Nature may have made some difference, habit, and education which is early habit, make more. Here then follows the enquiry; What is this education, thus highly valuable, which is the best kind?

Education, so far as it is requisite to qualify one for a certain profession, as it suits each particular talent and condition, falls not within my present design. Undoubtedly this is fit and right to be weighed by all, and the varieties arising from hence should be carefully attended to. But I shall confine myself to what is general and necessary in all ranks, that which is enjoined in the text; let us then see what the words point out.

Parents bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; that is, as outward nourishment supports the life of a child, contributes to its growth and strength, and conducts it, by degrees, to that measure of force and stature for which nature designed it; in like manner let religious instruction be the nourishment of their minds, employing and strengthening their reason, opening and enlarging their faculties, and fixing in them those just notions of right and wrong, which may lead them to true knowledge,

Benefits of an early virtuous Education. 153

ledge, the perfection of a Spiritual Being. This seems to be the force of the word *nurture*. SERM.
X.

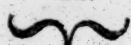
That which follows, *the admonition of the Lord*, implies farther, that these good principles should not be implanted for speculation only, we must continually enforce, inculcate, and take care that they be reduced into practice, employed as lights to direct, judges to examine, and monitors to reprove their conduct. Here then are enjoined two things, children are to be brought up in the *knowledge* and in the *practice* of religion; concerning each of which I shall speak briefly.

As to the knowledge of religion, children, it is allowed, may learn historical truths, nay, they may learn them with ease and delight, as their memories are quick and curiosity strong. Hence they should first be well instructed in the history of the Old and New Testaments. Along with the facts, they also learn insensibly the chief doctrines of religion; that there is one God, Invisible, Eternal, who created the world, who sees, fills, and governs all; that Jesus Christ, by his Sufferings and Gospel, delivered men from the dominion of sin and ignorance; that he shall come again to judge the earth, and reward or punish mankind, according to their deserts, in a future state.

They are next to be instructed in the duties required from them; those first which are properly religious; that they are to serve this God who made them; that they are to love him as
their

SERM.

X.



their greatest Benefactor ; to pray to him ; to consider him as every where present, acquainted with all their words and actions, nay with their inmost thoughts.

After these come the moral duties ; they are to be taught obedience to parents and teachers, inviolable adherence to truth, modesty, temperance and justice.

In all which instructions, we are carefully to avoid puzzling them with doubts and intricate questions ; what is necessary to be known being easily made plain, and levelled to the apprehension of almost infant years. And another caution is, to use all possible mildness and gentleness, winning their affections whilst we enlighten their reason. To which should be added, an attention to their several tempers and dispositions, that manner of instruction which is best adapted to these, being ever most successful.

Having thus attained to the *knowledge*, they are next to be trained up in the *practice* of religion, and herein consists the main use of education. They must be taught to apply these principles to the regulation of their behaviour : Care must be taken that they make a right use of their knowledge, and their conduct must be strictly watched over, otherwise they will look upon religion as matter of mere speculation, and shall come, in the end, to pay little regard to the judgment of their own consciences.

For

For this Purpose it is necessary to impress on their minds a constant respect for religion, as the most excellent, the most useful of all things; to observe the whole course of their behaviour; to shew them their faults; to accustom them to examine their own actions, and judge of them by their belief; by a due use of rewards and punishments, to keep them steady in the right path, as well as by the encouragement of constant good example, the most effectual of all instructions, yet least thought of.

Such a course of education would undoubtedly have the best effects, and does not seem to be very difficult; yet I think there is little need of argument to shew how defective general practice is. How many do we meet with esteemed to have been well brought up, who are ignorant in most of these things? Many of the vices, of consequence much of the misery, with which the world abounds, may be traced back to the carelessness and mistaken notions of those who should form the mind at its first entrance into life. For what is the usual conduct?

The first years are neglected, as incapable of improvement, and yet these are the most precious. Then are false notions imbibed, evil habits take root. For reason dawns very early, soon acquires considerable strength if the hand of discipline would assist, and the first impressions sink the deepest.

Nay, what is worse, children are not permitted only, they are indulged in their faults, they
are

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X.



are admired, applauded for them, humoured in their forwardness, and gratified in all their perverse desires. Yet this is the chief age of discipline: You should crop the shoots of vice while tender, and check the first efforts of unruly passion. This fatal indulgence cherisheth snakes, which shall grow up into venomous serpents, and sting to death.

Again ; Parents are very faulty in point of example ; they will not be at the pains of concealing their vices even from their children. Now, conceive children accustomed to behold instances of continual vice in those whom they are most bound to love and honour, what must be their youth ? What their manhood ? What man, what angel can preserve them uncorrupted ? If ye have natural affection, restrain your vices, at least, before these your children.

Another thing I shall but just take notice of, is, that even where some care of education is professed, the attention is turned away from the understanding to things less worthy, to bodily accomplishments, learning of languages, improvements of taste and fancy, at best to what is called science ; but the great task is neglected ; to fix in the mind betimes right principles and notions ; to assist reason in its first workings upon these, to guide its course and rectify its motions, the fruits of which would be the most valuable of merely human blessings, goodness and sound judgment.

A farther evil is, that even they who are esteemed most wise, regard education in scarcely any other view, than as means for the fitting young persons for some profession or employment. With the known arts necessary to this end, they are required to learn little more than a regard to decency, reputation and honour; principles notoriously insufficient to preserve them virtuous in a corrupt world. A just sense of religion, a veneration of that Power who is every where present, can alone extend to all our actions, take in every circumstance and opportunity, comprehend the whole heart and soul, make us thoroughly, *inwardly* good; and if we should inadvertently or weakly stray, can scarcely fail of recalling us to our duty in the end.

Upon this foundation you may safely erect what superstructure you please, ornamental or useful, according to your condition; but without religion, whatever be your state, whether you be to govern or be governed, to teach or be taught, to enjoy plenty and power, or live by the labour of your hands, you cannot have solid certain worth, probity or diligence; you build a house upon sand, the first strong gust of temptation overthrows it.

Thus have we seen how necessary and useful is an early good education, the training up our first years in the *knowledge* and *practice* of religion: What shall we say of those parents who neglect this care? Surely ye are most unnatural, entailing vice and misery on those who should
be

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X.

be most dear to you ; ye are likewise most imprudent, laying up in their profligacy and disobedience the sharpest pangs of grief and shame for your own grey hairs. Evil citizens are ye also, breeding up a bad race to corrupt society. And O! what account shall ye give to the great Judge of those souls with which he hath thus peculiarly entrusted you. But I wave what farther might be said on this important subject, hastening to the main point in view, the *application* to the present occasion, upon which give me leave to treat more at large.

It is the duty of every parent to bring up his children *piously* and *virtuously* ; a truth I would once more exhort all who hear me seriously to consider. But what shall be done with those who, by their situation in life, are disabled from obtaining this advantage, with childhood poor and friendless ? Who shall breed up, instruct, watch over it ?

It is not perhaps practicable in a large state like ours, for the publick to provide for this want ; at least, in fact, it is not so provided for : It remains then, the care of private persons, must be the work of public charity. In which way, indeed, very much good hath been done among us.

This virtue, charity, amid the deluge of vice and folly which hath almost overwhelmed us, shining out with a clear ray, affordeth still hope of better times, and some plea for the Divine Mercy. Yet as the best things have their dark side

side and wrong points of view; men find out arguments even against bounties of this sort, such as help to make themselves easy in withholding their contribution, and sometimes impose on the well-designing. Let us candidly examine the point.

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It is asked, "Are not these foundations for the education of poor children an encouragement to idleness? Is it not true, that parents will neglect to provide what is necessary for the bringing up their children, while they expect that others will charitably take upon themselves that expence?"

In answer to this question, observe, That there are many who, from the accidents of human life, are incapable of affording to their children any kind of education; what then? Shall not these children be taken care of? And how may that be done except in this way?

Again; There are many parents so ignorant, that they have no sense of the usefulness of instruction; should not their children, however, be instructed? And in what other manner can that be effected? Many parents also are so profligate, that they regard not the morals of their children, but are content that they should be wicked: Must these innocent creatures be all lost?

Granting then the objection to have force, it reacheth but to few: But it may be doubted whether it hath any. Persons unnatural enough
to

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SERM, to neglect their children, merely upon a possibi-
X. lity of their being taken care of by charity,
would probably neglect them at any rate.

At the utmost, beware of giving weight to an argument which tends equally to overthrow all kinds of charity : For which is there that is not abused, that is not in some instance perverted to encourage vice and imposture ? What then ? If the wickedness of a few abuse a good institution to their own evil ends, does that prove the institution evil ? Certainly not. Such abuses should only induce us to be more careful in guarding against them, to chuse for objects of our bounty, as far as may be, the children of the sober and industrious, who have been reduced to want by calamities or sickness.

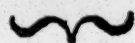
But these kinds of charitable foundations are farther liable to exception. “ They disturb the
“ subordination of the world ; they raise up the
“ lowest rank to push upon that above, and rob
“ the meanest offices in the commonwealth,
“ which are yet most necessary, of the hands
“ destined to them, by giving to these principles
“ of learning, and thus setting them above la-
“ bour and servile employment.”

This effect, if true, is indeed an evil one : But what degree of learning is likely to produce such effect ? Surely not that which is acquired here, the mere knowledge of letters and accounts. In times when these arts were very rare, even in their lowest degree, they had this consequence : Why ? Because being rare, they
qualified

qualified the possessors for offices not easily filled. But now that they have become extremely common, they cease to be such qualification; they can afford no peculiar maintenance, and the want of them is rather a mark of extraordinary lowness, than the possession, I mean in the degree here taught, any distinction of honour.

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It is either extraordinary excellence in these arts, which recommends to public esteem, and raises from low to liberal employment, which excellence these schools certainly do not bestow. Or it is some conspicuous talent they may give an opportunity of exerting, which is purely accidental and not to be computed; or if it be, it is so far useful and an argument in favour of such schools. But a knowledge of the mere rudiments of letters cannot be a ground of such superiority, as inspires to conceit, or exempts from the necessity of labour. On the other hand, the being trained up in early habits of sobriety, diligence and virtue, must have good effects on their riper years. And it is the known tendency of religion to render men modest and humble, faithful in the discharge of their duty, and content with their condition, however mean and low in the estimation of mankind.

“But Providence (you say) hath placed these children in their present desolate state, why should we interpose or attempt to alter its dispensation?”

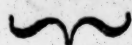
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Well,

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X.



Well, and doth not the same Providence send diseases? Should we therefore reject all attempts to heal them? Doth it not permit vices? Shall we therefore refuse to punish or amend them? It is as much in the order of Providence that we should relieve distresses, as that itself should send them. In so doing, we concur with it, nay resemble, as nearly as man can, its excellence and goodness, comforting and preserving.

“But are we to distress ourselves and families
“in order to assist any?”

In some cases why not? When, or to what degree need not be determined here; it concerns not the present case. We demand not this height of virtue; a trifle is required, such as cannot hurt any, few shall miss. And what satisfaction may even this trifle afford, in the sense of having done well, in a view of the good effects hereafter? Benefactors not seldom have in themselves, or their's, tasted the fruits of their own bounty and felt returns of gratitude, from those whom they had assisted to breed up. Watering and fencing, small cost and labour are sufficient to preserve young plants: and well do they repay the husbandman in ornament and shelter to the land, affording to himself, perhaps, or flocks, a friendly shade.

“But we are farther required to look around,
“to consider the manners of the lowest rank:
“Are they not as profligate as ever? What
“good effects then have these foundations pro-
duced?”

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“duced? And what avail reasonings against
“facts?”

SERM
X.

We grant it, supposing the fact true, and the case fully stated: But such comparisons can scarcely afford any just decision. For the manners of the common people may be very corrupt now, and yet may have been more corrupt formerly; or these institutions may have really lessened this corruption, yet it may have increased more from other causes, such as greater plenty and trade, or worse example in those of higher rank, and the like.

Which of these is our case I shall not determine, nor can it easily be determined, it being necessary to take in a multitude of circumstances very hard to be computed. But this I will venture to say, that when an institution hath, on such occasion, an undeniable good tendency, and hath produced good, this institution, notwithstanding general loose computations, or accidental abuses, must be deemed good. Now the good tendency here is indisputable; that good hath been actually produced in this way appears from many instances; take it in a small one, but much to our purpose, this now before us.

This Charity - school is one of the first erected in this city, and consists of the children of reduced housekeepers, many of Popish parents, who are here, under the care of a discreet and diligent master, instructed in the principles of the Christian religion, taught to

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SERM.
X.

read and write, with some knowledge of accounts, are cloathed yearly, and, as they become qualified, are by the directors of this school put out as servants to gentlemen, or apprentices to Protestant tradesmen.

In this manner upwards of two hundred have been put out to business, out of which number very few have disappointed the designs of this charitable endowment. The rest are settled in different parts of the country, all in useful employments, and are good and honest members of the community : Some of them contribute to this school, from whence they derived their own education, and present comfortable subsistence.

And it is very remarkable, that out of the many Popish children educated here, but one has relapsed into the errors of his ancestors.

And do we yet question the usefulness of such institutions? Do we still doubt whether we shall encourage this before us, so pious and humane?

Suppose the worst, what cannot be the case, that your bounty here should produce no good at all; still it is not an useless expence; you intend well, ye endeavour to do well; ye may fail of success, but your virtue is certain. Here is no disappointment, you gain the most valuable of all possessions.

Having thus, as it seems to me, fully satisfied your reason, I might be allowed to direct myself

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self to your passions. But these are already on my side.

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Your pity prevents my further description. The cause requires not such aids. Let your own consciences, let severest reason judge, can any thing be more fit, more worthy, more suitable to our nature and religion, than for each, according to his abilities, to encourage an institution so useful and excellent.

Have ye regard to the good of the community? Who hath not? Surely the instructing these boys in honesty and labour, is highly beneficial to the community. Have ye concern about the welfare of posterity? Educate these; train up honest workmen, skilful artists, fair dealers, faithful servants for your children. Have ye even self-love? Gratify it here: What can be so pleasing as the performance of a kind humane work? Have ye regard to your future happiness? Embrace this opportunity: The promises of hereafter are all made to this virtue.

In fine, my brethren, let not any specious pretences, deceive you into an omission or refusal of your concurrence in the good work now recommended to your charity. Let not covetousness, under colour of providing for your families; let not vanity, under shew of appearing suitable to your rank; let not narrow-souled worldliness, under pretext of taking care of a small fortune; let not hard-heartedness, under disguise of firmness and strength of mind; let not pride and affectation, under appearance of

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SERM. a gay fashionable unconcern about poor and
X. mean objects ; let not any of these delude you
~~~~~ to with-hold your hands, prevent you from raising up innocent friendless creatures into a state of religion, industry and virtue.

May the God of Mercy direct us all to act suitably to our conditions, as men, citizens and Christians ; and pour down his blessings upon ourselves, our families, our country ; preserving among us a spirit of peace and loyalty, of religion and charity, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON



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# S E R M O N   X I .

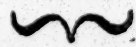
The Doctrine of the Trinity  
considered.

Preached in Trinity - College Chapel,  
*Dublin; June 17, 1753.*

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I CORINTHIANS xiii. 9.

*For we know in part.*

**F**ALSE religions, for the most part, wrapt SERM.  
up in mystery, concealed themselves from XI.  
public view, and, under the shelter of   
some venerable obscurity, obtained credit for  
their fraud and impostures. Accordingly, the  
enemies of Christianity have endeavoured to fix  
this imputation upon it, have represented its  
mysteries as of this kind, as veils to cover fic-  
tion. I propose to shew the injustice of this  
charge, to point out the cases in which mys-  
teries render suspected the doctrine that contains  
them, and to prove, that in this as well as other  
respects, the religion of Jesus Christ is superior

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SERM. to all that ever appeared in the world. It is in  
XI this point of view only that I design to consider  
the words of the Apostle, *For we know in Part,*  
which I would thus interpret.

In this mortal state we cannot see clearly the things of another world; we cannot fully comprehend all the doctrines which revelation teaches; but this is no just objection to our holy religion; it argues no defect in that, but imperfection in ourselves. It shall be the business of the following discourse to shew the truth of this consequence in the method laid down.

There are *four* cases in which mysteries render a religion justly suspected. *First*, When they conceal the rise of that religion, so that we cannot examine whence it proceeds, whether from the spirit of truth or of falsehood. *Secondly*, When they involve some contradiction. *Thirdly*, When they encourage immorality. *Lastly*, When any other system is found liable to fewer or less difficulties.

Let us consider these respectively; each of them seems to contain somewhat worthy of our attention, and suitable to the design of the present day.

*First*; Mysteries render a religion justly suspected when they hide its rise, so that we cannot examine from whence it proceeds, whether from the spirit of truth or of falsehood. No religion ought to be received, that brings not  
with



with it marks and credentials, as it were, of its  
divine original.

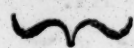
SERM.  
XI.

For instance; if you ask from *Mahomet* the proofs of his mission, he has none to produce, but a pretended power from Heaven to destroy all who do not believe in him. Enquire of what kind are the doctrines he taught, the laws he delivered? You will find them to be a heap of monstrous fables and absurdities, containing scarcely any thing reasonable, except a few articles borrowed from the *Jewish* and Christian revelations; enjoining besides, several precepts contrary to reason and morality. Ask his followers what signs God hath wrought in confirmation of their religion? They tell you of such only as bear plain tokens of imposture, such as are puerile, unmeaning or ridiculous, and vouched by no evidence.

On the other hand, if you ask of Jesus Christ the proofs of his mission, he gives you such as are plain and sensible: The blind see, the deaf hear, the sick are healed, the dead return to life. *If you believe me not, saith he, believe my works; the works which I do in my Father's name bear witness of me.* Examine the law he delivered; behold sublime doctrines, pure morality, prophecies exactly fulfilled, a more noble and complete system of precepts, than had ever been collected by the most inquisitive and thinking philosophers. Do you ask for the confirmation of signs? Christians produce miracles without number, wrought publickly, acknowledged by  
their

SERM.

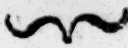
XI.



their bitterest enemies, attested by many who died to confirm their evidence, and rendered visible, as it were, at this day, by the spreading of the Gospel, in opposition to the interests and passions of men, the united force of power, rage and cunning ; a progress which could proceed from truth and reason only. Thus the mysteries of the Gospel are not of this first sort which render a religion suspected ; *they do not hide its origin.*

*Secondly* ; Those mysteries render a religion justly suspected which involve a contradiction. If the Christian religion, notwithstanding all the bright marks of divinity it bears, the sublimity of its doctrine, the excellence of its morality, the accomplishment of its prophecies, the greatness and number of its miracles, the piety, integrity and sufferings of its martyrs ; if, notwithstanding all these, it should involve contradictions, it ought to be rejected. For whatsoever is evidently demonstrated must be admitted as true : Now supposing the divinity of the Christian religion to be demonstrated evidently, it follows that it must be admitted as true. But if it be possible that a contradiction, a proposition appearing to us evidently false, should yet be true, it is clear that evidence is not a mark of truth ; and if it be not, we can have no certain proof that a religion is divine ; its proofs never can be more evident than the falshood of the proposition it would establish. It is therefore



fore true, that mysteries, involving a contradiction, render a religion justly suspected. SERM.  
XI.  
Let us judge of the Christian religion by this rule. 

There is not any article in our faith more seemingly liable to objection than the following: One God who has only one essence, yet three persons; one Father, who is God; one Son, who is God; one Holy Spirit, who is God; and these three are one. The Father, who is one with the Son, does not take human nature upon him; the Son, who is one with the Father, does; the Holy Spirit, who is one with the Father and Son, proceeds from both in a manner unspeakable; the Father and Son, who are one with the Holy Spirit, do not proceed. Are not these contradictory notions; they may seem, but are not.

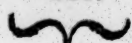
If we said that God hath but one essence, and that he hath three essences in the same sense that we maintain he hath but one; If we said that God is three in the same sense that he is one; that would be a contradiction. But this we by no means affirm. We believe, upon the authority of a divine revelation, that God is one, in a sense to which we give the name of Essence; we believe that he is three, in a sense to which we give the name of Person. We do not determine either what is that Essence, or what is that Person. This exceeds human reason, but does not contradict it.

*Again;*

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SERM.

XI.



*Again* ; If we said that God, in the sense we have named essence, assumed a human body ; and yet that the Father, who is comprehended in that notion, did not assume such body, we should advance a contradiction ; but this we by no means affirm ; we believe, on the authority of a divine revelation, that what is named the Person of the Son in the Divinity, of which it is acknowledged that we have no distinct conception, was united to human nature, in a manner which we do not determine, because God hath not been pleased to reveal it to us. This exceeds reason, but does not contradict it.

*Again* ; If we said that God, in the sense named Essence, proceeds from the Father and the Son, at the same time that the Father and the Son do not proceed, we should advance a contradiction ; but this we by no means affirm ; we believe, on the authority of a divine revelation, that what is named Holy Spirit in the Divinity, of whom we have no distinct conception, because God hath not been pleased to give us one, proceeds in an unspeakable manner, at the same time that what is named Father and Son, which in this respect differs from the Holy Spirit, do not proceed. This exceeds reason, but does not contradict it.

Nay, to say something stronger ; so far is there from being any thing contradictory in this doctrine, that to assert there is, is itself a contradiction. For what is a contradiction ? A manifest



nifest opposition between two known clear notions. Now when I say that a divine Essence subsists in three Persons, in order to prove a contradiction herein, it is necessary that I should have a distinct conception of what I call Essence, and what I call Person; but as I profess myself perfectly ignorant of both, it is impossible that I should find any contradiction herein. When, therefore, I say that there is one divine Essence in three Persons, I do not pretend to explain the nature of this Unity, nor the nature of this Trinity; I only mean to advance, on the authority of a divine revelation, that there is in God somewhat which exceeds my comprehension, and gives grounds for this proposition; there is one Father, one Son, and one Holy Spirit.

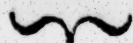
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If indeed we were to judge of Christianity by the tenets of the *Romish* church, we must give up the point: To assert, as that church doth, that the body of Jesus Christ is entire and literally present in the host or consecrated bread of the Eucharist, and yet that the nature of bread remains at the same time, is a plain contradiction. But this is not christianity, but a corruption of it; not the revelation of God, but the invention of men.

A *third* kind of mysteries, which render a religion suspected, are those that encourage immorality: This was the character of Paganism. The Heathens affected mystery in most  
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of their religious exercises, affirming that it infused reverence towards the Gods. Such were the mysteries of *Apis*; those sacred to *Venus*; and those of *Ceres* in the city of *Eleusis*, more famous than any other. In these secrecy was preserved with the utmost care, and the violation of it punished with death. But it is plain, from the accounts which remain of them, that under these ceremonies were concealed the most flagitious crimes, such as are not fit to be mentioned. How much more infamous then must have been the practice of them under the sanction of piety and worship of the Gods.

The mysteries of the Christian religion are far removed from all such profligate indulgences. The Gospel not only prescribes to us the most perfect morality, but, in teaching some mysteries, intends that from them we should draw consequences to purify our manners. Thus if it discover that there are three persons in the Divine Essence, it is to show, that the whole Deity, if I may so speak, concerns himself in our favour, and to kindle up our zeal by this consideration. If it tell us, that the Eternal Son of God died in our nature upon the cross, it is to raise in us an abhorrence of vice, by shewing at how infinite a ransom it was atoned. If it teach, that the Holy Spirit is always ready to assist us with his grace, it is to encourage us to resist temptations, to join our own endeavours, and *work out our salvation with fear and trembling.*

*Lastly;*



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*Lastly*; We said that mysteries render a religion justly suspected, if a system be found which, rejecting these mysteries, is itself free from difficulties equally great.

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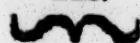
What we have to say on this head may serve as an answer to that objection, which unbelievers have continual recourse to, when all others have been answered; “but religion hath its “mysteries;” religion hath its difficulties; and this they make the foundation of their unbelief.

In reply hereto, we demand, where is the system which, setting us free from the difficulty of religion, does not plunge us into greater? Let this appear, and we submit to it. Now collect all the difficulties which we acknowledge to be in religion, whatever is incomprehensible in the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, in the incarnation and passion of our Lord, in the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit; add to these, all the supposed difficulties which we do not acknowledge, such as objections against the Being or Providence of God, against the authority of our Scriptures; those taken from the multitude of sects and divisions among Christians; collect all these, dispose them to the best advantage, build up your fabric of infidelity on the ruins of religion. We demand what system of infidelity can, you declare yourself for, which is not much less defensible than religion?

Will you chuse that of the Atheist, maintain that the belief of a God is founded only in superstition

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perstition and fearfulness? But is not this system embarrassed with unconquerable difficulties? Are not the mysteries of Atheism infinitely less defensible than the mysteries of religion? Is it not altogether shocking and contradictory to reason? Will you fly to another party, become a disciple of *Epicurus*, acknowledge a God, but deny his Providence? And is this a system free from difficulties? Shew then how you can account for this; that God, who did not disdain to form, should disdain to govern the world? How account for an infinitely wise and good Being making free reasonable creatures, yet giving them no rule to walk by; neither loving nor rewarding virtue, nor punishing vice?

Or, acknowledging the Being and Providence of God, will you deny revelation? But is this a system without difficulties? Demonstrate to us then, that the Scriptures were not written by those to whom they are ascribed; that those persons never wrought a miracle: Prove that fishermen and publicans, some of the lowest and most ignorant of the *Jewish* populace, were able, without supernatural assistance, to speak concerning the origin of the world, the Attributes of God, the state of man, his nature and duties, in a manner more just, more noble, more elevated, than the *Platos*, the *Zenos*, the *Aristotles*, and all the sublime geniusses, who render antiquity venerable, and, at this day, fill the world with their glory?

Discouraged



Discouraged by all these difficulties, will you determine, that the best system is to have a fixed one? Will you take refuge in Scepticism, and doubt of all things? But is this a system without difficulties? Try to be consistent with yourself; look within; reconcile this fantastic scheme of universal doubting with the notions of your own mind, with the inward feelings of your heart and the dictates of your conscience. When this is done, which surely is impossible, we shall look for serious arguments to oppose to you.

How then will you act? Where find an evidence to your liking, a light without darkness? Perceiving every system embarrassed with doubts, will you reject all, renounce all enquiry, and rush blindfold into the embraces of pleasure, resolved to enjoy the present, without hope or anxiety concerning doubtful futurity, and say with the voluptuous man, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die?* But hath not this system its mysteries? Suppose religion barely probable, ought we not to believe it, at least to act as if we did? the most important alternative of endless happiness or misery; should not this alone be sufficient to confine us within the limits of our duty, and make us regulate our behaviour in such a manner, that if there be a hell we may escape its torments?

The sum is; religion hath its mysteries; this we freely profess: Religion hath its difficulties; this we acknowledge: Yet, after all, the mysteries of the Gospel are not such as render a re-

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ligion justly suspected, with all its difficulties, after all the objections and attacks of infidelity, this religion is the most clear and certain of all systems, and the wisest choice man can make, is to embrace and adhere to it inviolably.

To compleat our argument one thing remains to be done, to consider a question frequently put and of great importance; "Why these mysteries? Why this darkness? Was it not more worthy of the Goodness of God to bestow upon us a religion full of light, without shadow or veil? There are several causes which render us unable to discover certain truths of religion.

The *first* is the narrow limits of our minds. The understanding is, for the most part, confined to one object; the most enlarged can grasp but very few at once. To think well upon a subject, it is necessary to view it alone, to exclude every thing beside, and shut the eyes against all around them. Thus it is with the passions; you can have but one strong passion at once, the others all sink in it, at least disappear for the time. Besides, one faculty, deeply employed, takes away the action of all the rest; profound meditation takes away all sense of outward objects, strong passion all power of reflection; so narrow are the limits of our minds. Now a little degree of reflection on this limitation must convince us, that men can make but a small progress in sciences which are very complex,



plex, and never can be able to penetrate into the bottom of the mysteries of religion, which, from the subject it is conversant about, must be difficult to be comprehended, especially since we never can apply even these very limited faculties to the study of truth, as they are perpetually divided, called off by impressions on the body, by outward cares, and thoughts foreign to the objects we would contemplate.

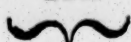
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. Add to this a *farther* reflection; the most simple truths and objects have their depths, which we cannot fathom, because they are some way connected with infinity. For instance, nothing is more simple than this truth, there are without me objects which strike my eyes, raise motions in my brain and perceptions in my mind; yet this simple truth hath its abysses, because it is united with questions relating to infinity, which I cannot comprehend: It is connected with this; May not the Supreme Being raise perceptions in my mind without any action of outward objects? Is it consistent with the goodness and truth of the Supreme Being to excite such preceptions in my mind, as necessitate me to believe that there are outward objects, if in reality such objects do not exist? It is connected with many such questions, which we never can discuss, every thing relating to infinity being so far incomprehensible to us. Prudence indeed requires that we should admit, as demonstrated, truths which, with regard to us,

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bear the marks of demonstration ; it is according to this rule that we shall be judged. But, after all, the Perfect Being alone hath perfect demonstrations ; at least, none but the Perfect One can behold, in the immensity of his knowledge, all the relations which finite beings have with infinity. And this leads to consider a second cause of the imperfection of our knowledge in religion, which is the *sublimity of those mysteries* that we charge with obscurity. For what are these mysteries ? What are the objects they treat of ? Are they not the most grand, the most sublime of all things, the Essence of the Great Creator, the Attributes of the Supreme Being, the dispensations of Infinite Wisdom and Justice ? It leadeth us in pursuit of *that wind which blows where it listeth*, and in an instant pervadeth every corner of the universe. And we, short-sighted creatures, whom every thing stops, every thing confounds, shall we be surprized that we cannot pierce to the bottom of these mysteries ? *Canst thou by searching find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection ? It is as high as Heaven, what canst thou do ? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know ? Where wast thou when he laid the foundations of the earth, when he shut up the sea with doors, when he made the cloud the garment thereof, and the darkness a swaddling band for it ; when he set bars, and said, hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, here shall thy proud waves be stayed ? Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor ? O the depth of the riches of the wisdom*  
and



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and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his SERM.  
judgments, and his ways past finding out? Let us XI.  
adore such incomprehensible Majesty; and since  
we cannot know him perfectly, let us study to  
know him as well as such limited creatures  
can. Let us say with *Moses*, *Lord, I beseech you,*  
*shew me thy glory*; and with the Prophet, *Open*  
*my eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things of thy*  
*law.*

A third cause of the imperfection of our knowledge, is the great end which God, in his infinite Wisdom, proposed in sending us into the world, namely, that we might be good men, worthy members of society. Suppose that God had burthened his religion with an explanation of all those complicated truths concerning which it is absolutely silent, with an explanation of those mysteries it discloseth but imperfectly; that he had explained fully his own Nature, and Essence, and Attributes; that he had laid open to us the operations of his Holy Spirit in our hearts, and led us into the secrets of immense eternity: Suppose that he had thus multiplied speculative notions to infinity, what time should we have had to bestow on practical duties? Distracted by the cares of life, by its wants and necessary toils, what time could we have bestowed in assisting the wretched, in visiting the sick, in comforting the afflicted, and, what is still more, in studying and reforming our own hearts? Our Creator hath wisely confined our knowledge; he hath taught us that only which is closely connected with our  
N 3 duty,

SERM. duty, to the end that we may be always employed  
 XI in the practice of our duty, and religion contains nothing which may call us off from it.

The *last* cause of our imperfect knowledge of religion, as well as of nature, is the miseries inseparable from this life. To ask why God hath left some articles of religion in darkness, is to ask why he hath not given us a nature like to that of pure spirits? We should rank the imperfection of our knowledge with the other evils of life, with banishment, with imprisonment, with sickness, with the loss of, or separation from, those who are dear to us. The objection taken from this darkness which hides from our eyes so many objects, may be answered in the same way as those drawn from the other calamities. This is not the place of our happiness: Our soul is here immersed in matter. This is a state of trial and discipline: We desire happiness, yet are doomed to misery; we pant after immortality, yet must quickly die; we love knowledge, yet are condemned to ignorance. Every where, within and without us, we find traces of original grandeur, and marks of universal depravation. These are the footsteps of sin, which, entering into the world, dimmed our faculties, and has thrown a cloud over the whole face of nature. We are placed here in a world where we know ourselves but imperfectly; where, amidst our sublimest enquiries and deepest meditations, we are but as children amused with toys and trifles: This is the



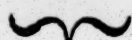
the comparison used by the apostle in the words following my text, *When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* Another period is to succeed this state, which *shall put away childish things*, shall draw up the curtain which now hides from us the most affecting objects; *now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face*; and think how surprizing a change this must be to the soul; instead of assisting in these our imperfect devotions, it shall find itself in the midst of choirs of Angels, *amid ten thousand times ten thousand that stand before him*; instead of our mortal hymns, it hears at once the hallelujahs of heavenly spirits, who cry continually, *holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory*: Instead of tracing here in the frame of nature some faint marks of the Divine Attributes, it finds itself in the midst of the most magnificent works of the Creator, in the midst of the heavenly *Jerusalem, whose gates are pearl, the walls jasper, and its streets of pure gold.* And do we yet fear death? Are our affections still fixed on this world? Is it necessary to tear us from thence, and drag us, as it were, to that place, the seat of everlasting happiness?

When *Elisba* beheld the prophet *Elija* carried away from him, and ascending through the air in a chariot of fire, deprived of so good a master, well might he cry out, *O my Father, my Father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!* Such lamentations are suitable to our self-love, which

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makes us prefer our own happiness to that of persons the most dear to us. But could *Elija* himself wish to return? Could he, mounting into Heaven, he, to whose eyes earth now appears but a point, now disappears, could he regret this world and its inhabitants? Is not every soul among us in like manner called upon to break the chains which unite it to this mortal body? Is not every soul among us in like manner called upon to be ready for its departure from this tabernacle of clay? The messenger of God, the chariot of fire is not far from any of us. Think before-hand; prevent in your thoughts that moment, that you may be prepared for it; contemplate seriously the advantages of the exchange. *Now you know in part*; you see dimly through a cloud: Lo, the hand of death is about to draw back the veil, to dispell this darkness, to justify religion, to confirm your fears or crown all your hopes.

In which hour, may God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, support and receive us into the arms of his Mercy!

SERMON



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## S E R M O N XII.

The Blessing of implicit Faith  
in the Gospel.

Preached at St. Bridget's, Dublin;  
October 6, 1754.

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ST. JOHN XX. 29.

*Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have  
believed.*

**E**ASINESS of belief is the vice of weak minds and narrow understandings. Many, observing this, have past into the contrary extreme, and, for fear of believing too much, refuse to believe any thing extraordinary; a fault equally unreasonable, and harder to be corrected: For the credulous may be undeceived, but pride and conceit of understanding are seldom convinced. May we not justly rank unbelievers in this latter class, who fly from superstition into impiety, and, to avoid the imputation of credulity, run into obstinacy? In the Religion of Nature there are many important

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portant articles proved with the strongest evidence, which, viewed in all lights, still strike us with conviction: Such are the Eternity, Knowledge, Power, Immensity, of God, truths universally acknowledged and undeniable; yet, relating to them, many questions have arisen which we cannot perfectly answer, and difficulties to which we cannot give a full solution.

If this be so in the Religion of Nature, which is founded upon reason alone, we have cause to expect more obscurity in that of Revelation, which is conversant chiefly in the things of an invisible world; and yet mark how partially these men argue in this point. If a Revelation discover nothing new, which may not be found out by unassisted reason, they reject it as superfluous and not from God, who cannot be supposed to employ extraordinary means for conveying that instruction, which might be attained in the ordinary way. If, on the other hand, a Revelation discover something new, and such as we cannot perfectly comprehend and account for, they reject it as unreasonable, and refuse to believe what they cannot compleatly understand. Thus in two opposite extremes, by considering only a part in each, they err in both. For, surely to convey to us truths discoverable by reason, but farther explained and confirmed, rendered more universally certain, and enforced by rewards and punishments, is an end worthy of the divine interposition. On the other side,  
if



if this Revelation should contain some doctrines not discoverable by reason alone, nor in all their circumstances clearly accountable from it, yet tending to establish and strengthen the others, this is so far from being an objection to, that it is a farther proof of the usefulness of this Revelation, and it is most fit and right, that we should believe them upon the authority which discloses them to us. It is our firm assurance of these, and the making them the foundation of our actions, which is named Faith, and upon which is pronounced the blessing in my text.

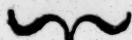
Faith, in general, is the assenting to the principles of religion upon his authority who discloses them to us. Concerning this faith men run into two contrary mistakes; one sort refuse to believe any thing unless it be learned, and can be accounted for from reason; these, taking away *faith*, are not Christians. The others place the whole of religion in *faith* alone; these, taking away good works, are not true Christians but enthusiasts. It is of great importance to avoid both these extremes, to pay just, and only just, regard to *faith*. To direct our judgment herein is the intent of the following discourse, in which I shall draw such observations from the words of the text, as may tend to explain the *nature* and *desert* of religious faith.

But as the words themselves are liable to be misunderstood, I shall first lay before you the occasion and true sense of them.

Thomas,

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*Thomas*, one of the twelve apostles, had doubted of the truth of our Saviour's resurrection, and refused to believe an event so wonderful without the most convincing proofs; *except he should see in his hands the print of the nails, and put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side.* When our Lord had condescended to satisfy his scruples in the manner which he required, and had, by such irresistible evidence, forced an acknowledgment of his conviction from him, he reproves his incredulity in this gentle manner: *Thomas, because thou hast seen thou hast believed; blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed.* As if he had said, The conditions which thou hast required to fix thy assent, however unnecessary, have been complied with, and thy belief extorted by arguments which leave not a possibility of doubt; but their merit is greater who found their faith upon reasonable and probable grounds, without demanding such strict evidence, as is not necessary to gain belief, and cannot always be obtained. For we must not suppose our Lord's meaning to be, that the Faith which is grounded upon the slightest degree of evidence is, for that reason, most meritorious; Because this might be a rash and erroneous assent, and might open a gate to all the extravagancies of enthusiasm and follies of superstition: but as all truths are not capable of the same kind of evidence, as the things of an invisible world cannot be made the objects of sense, and  
historical



historical facts be proved by demonstration, so he acts prudently, and is worthy of praise, who requires such evidence for any doctrine, and such evidence only as the nature of the doctrine will admit, who, meeting with that, gives firm and candid assent, and makes this reasonable just persuasion the ground of his subsequent conduct.

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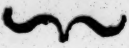


This explanation of the text being premised, I proceed to observe,

*First* ; It is plain, from the words of our Lord, that the assent of Faith is inferior in degree to that which arises from demonstrative proof, or from the testimony of our senses. These two are the sources from which springs the highest degree of conviction we are capable of ; for we are compelled, by the necessity of our nature, to assent to a self-evident truth, or whatever we see clearly deduced from it, and every man readily acquiesces in the truth of a fact to which he hath been an eye-witness, nor can any subtilty of argument induce him to disbelieve it ; but in Faith, which is conversant about things future and unseen, we cannot have this kind of assurance. Nothing which contradicts the plain dictates of reason can be admitted as an article of Faith, and therefore Faith, as being itself to be tried by reason, must be a degree of assent inferior to that grounded on the intuitive or demonstrative evidence of reason.

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The miracles and resurrection of our Lord, which are great proofs of his divine mission, were appeals to the senses of mankind; nay, the accounts of these must have been transmitted to us by others, so that we are to weigh their several circumstances, to consider how they come attested, to compare the doctrine with the facts, and thus, upon the result of all, establish our Faith; which several steps must of necessity, whatever enthusiasts may affirm to the contrary, place the evidence of Faith beneath that of demonstration and sense. It is true, the Apostles were eye-witnesses of our Lord's miracles, as the first converts were of theirs, and thus they had the evidence of sense to ground their Faith upon. But it was necessary that some should have been eye-witnesses, otherwise we should have no evidence at all for our religion; and it is impossible that all should be eye-witnesses, unless miracles had been continually wrought through all ages, in all countries, and in the view of every individual; the consequence of which must have been, that they could not have been proofs at all; for miracles being uncommon, extraordinary works, if they become common, they cease to be miracles.

Neither in truth is it reasonable to expect, that height of assurance in articles of Faith, as in the testimony of our senses concerning the objects about us. For let us suppose the veil to be removed, and those things which the eye of Faith beholds dimly now, to be laid open to  
our



our sight, that we are made spectators of the miseries which the divine displeasure inflicts in another life; must not a spectacle of such amazing horror be too deeply engraven in our memories ever to be worn out? Could any temptation ever induce us to plunge ourselves into such a state, or gain upon hearts haunted with such images of terror? Should we dare to offend while the groans and outcries of condemned wretches yet ring in our ears, and our minds are filled with such scenes of unutterable anguish? Thus we should be compelled by necessity to abstain from vice, and the reason of our obedience would be so violent, that the merit of it must be very small. It is therefore wisely ordered, that there should be some obscurity in these things; that we should see, in the Apostle's phrase, as through a glass darkly, to the end that, by a free obedience, we might become qualified to deserve a recompence hereafter.

But it is to be observed, *secondly*, that although the evidence of Faith be inferior to that of sense and demonstration, yet it is fully sufficient to determine the belief and practice of every reasonable person. That degree of certainty, which, in the affairs of life, can induce men to engage in very hazardous undertakings, must, by all the rules of reason, be sufficient to gain their credit, and influence their actions in matters of Faith, especially as in these latter we might, from their nature,

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nature, justly expect something more abstracted and obscure than in the ordinary occurrences about us. Are then our actions here grounded upon certain or fallible motives? We see what toil men undergo in the acquisition of wealth and honours, and yet how liable are the best laid schemes to innumerable disappointments! To what perils and losses doth the merchant expose himself for very doubtful gain? And doth not the ambitious man, who treads in the slippery path of court-favour, live exposed to perpetual danger? In diseases we resign our very lives to the skill of our physician, and implicitly submit ourselves to the most bitter remedies; thus undergoing certain pain for uncertain health. We see then, that men are guided by probability in all the concerns of life; if they abstained from every action till they had demonstrative proof of its event, they must lie down in endless inactivity, and the whole great wheel of human affairs for ever stand still. Why then should we insist upon greater certainty in points of religion, and deny obedience to its precepts, unless we have demonstration for every article it advances? Nay, the arguments for its truth are really stronger than those which govern us in secular affairs of the greatest consequence. The general consent of almost all nations in all ages, the nature, operations and propensities of our souls, the Justice and Goodness of God, give the most probable expectation of a future state. This hath been rendered yet more clear, and  
hath



hath been more fully discovered in a revelation sent from God, attested by a course of miracles, which the Divine Power alone could have wrought, strengthened by the suffering and resurrection of its great Author, and confirmed by the many wonderful works of his disciples, who gave the strongest proofs of their sincerity, dying in torments to witness the truth of their doctrine. There are no future events, no good things here which we can be thus secure of obtaining; yet the wisest men lay out the whole industry of their lives in pursuit of them. It is not therefore the doubtfulness or obscurity of religious truths which renders men unbelievers; we must look for the causes of infidelity in those passions that religion crosses and restrains. Rather than give up a favourite vice men run into inconsistencies, easy and credulous, and governed at most by probability in the greatest affairs of life which ought to be so clear and certain; yet in points relating to an hereafter, most nice, and scrupulous, and delicate reasoners, starting at the very shadow of a doubt, and demanding demonstration at every step. Whereas, since the expectations of religion are in truth grounded upon stronger evidence than that which the most cautious man requires or can obtain for any undertaking here, reason and common sense make it manifestly our duty to follow its dictates, and we cannot reject or disregard its precepts without taking away, at the same time, all foundation for action whatsoever.

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*Thirdly;*

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*Thirdly*; We find in the text a blessing pronounced upon those who believe. It may not be improper to enquire how this blessing is deserved, and wherein consists the merit of Faith. For if there be such a degree of probability for any doctrine as may clearly determine the judgment of a reasonable man to admit the truth of it, we cannot withhold our assent; we are so framed that we must give credit to the greatest evidence, and the bare act of believing can have no more desert than the opening our eyes and beholding objects in the light. If, on the contrary, the reasons for doubting of doctrines be stronger than any for assenting to them, if they be grounded upon uncertain tradition, or perplexed with absurdities and inconsistencies, our assent in this case is so far from being meritorious, that it is rash and erroneous; it is not religious Faith, but credulity and superstition. The question then is; wherein shall we fix the merit of Faith?

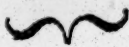
In answer to which let it be remarked, *first*, If indeed religious Faith consisted in our assenting to points merely speculative, it could not have any great moral worth, as we are manifestly guided in our judgment concerning them by the greater light of probability. But Faith is not of the same nature as science, where the understanding alone is to be employed, the heart and affections are likewise nearly interested in it. Hence, in points relating to it, it is not easy to follow the direction of unprejudiced reason; we are tempted to judge, not from the truth



truth and falshood of things, but as they please or displease, as they flatter or cross our darling inclinations. In order, therefore, to be possessed of a true religious Faith, it is necessary that we should come to examine the several articles of it with equal unbiaſſed minds. We must purify our hearts from every irregular passion, and resolve freely and ingenuously to embrace truth, however rigid and severe her appearance may be. Now this is no easy task, to guard against the deceitfulness of our own hearts, against those appetites that are ever ready to mingle themselves with all our reasonings, those silent, but powerful advocates in our own bosoms, from the influence of which nothing but care and attention, and a sincere love of truth, can preserve us. Here then we have laid before us a most material difference between Faith and Science. In Science the understanding proceeds without impediment, and is of course governed by the evidence it meets with, so that in assent of this kind there is no room for moral desert; in Faith it is otherwise, there are necessary to it a good ingenuous disposition of mind, a freedom from every evil habit and passion, a love of truth, and a resolution to submit to it, however disagreeable it may be. And certainly, in such a disposition, in such an unprejudiced dispassionate mind, there is merit and they deserve the blessing pronounced upon them, who, *not having seen, yet do believe.*

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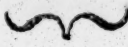
To illustrate this difference yet *farther*, we need only enquire how it hath come to pass, that in the religion of nature, the great principles of which are capable of demonstration, men have in all ages differed so widely, have advanced and maintained contrary systems with the greatest animosity, while, notwithstanding, in other sciences, they have unanimously submitted to the same, or to a less degree of evidence, than that which might have been obtained in this? The answer is plain; because in other sciences they followed freely the direction of their reason; in morality their passions and appetites interposed and perverted their judgments. And can we expect less prejudice from those passions against a most pure and perfect religion, sent from Heaven to raise and adorn our nature, by the exercise of the noblest moral virtues?

As there is considerable merit in thus preparing our minds for the reception of religious truth, in searching for it, and candidly acknowledging it when found, so is the steady adherence to it very praise-worthy. We cannot fail of meeting with many temptations to be shaken in our Faith, from the frailty of our nature and the depravity of the world, from considering that the promises of another life are distant in time and place; that we are liable to mistakes in all reasonings about what is future; that for the sake of this uncertain hope we must often deny ourselves immediate present enjoyments; these



these considerations strongly influence the mind to unbelief, and therefore a firmness in resisting them, a steady perseverance in the Faith, deserves the blessing pronounced upon it, and is a proper recommendation to the favour of Almighty God.

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There remains another consideration very material in the point before us, that Faith has a close and inseparable connexion with morality; a consideration which must render it still more valuable and meritorious. It is scarcely to be supposed that any man who lives immorally, can be a sincere believer of the Gospel; but granting it possible, certainly his belief hath not the nature, and deserveth not the name of religious Faith, which always implies not barely an assent of the mind, but also a serious disposition of heart, to act suitably to that assent. Even *Devils believe and tremble*. Belief aggravates the guilt of immorality, it is acknowledging the law and Lawgiver, and yet, with open eyes, transgressing the one and defying the other: Accordingly we find in all the praises which are given to Faith in Holy Scriptures, it is considered as a lively active principle, inspiring the heart and governing the conduct, not a mere speculative barren belief.

The sum is this: The assent of Faith is inferior in degree to that of sense and demonstration; yet it is abundantly sufficient to determine men through the whole course of their lives, as it is built upon stronger probabilities

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than those which govern the wisest men in all their actions and undertakings. This Faith merits likewise the blessing in the text, as it requires a good disposition, care and candour in searching for and embracing truth, as it recommends, and is necessarily connected with, the practice of moral virtue.

It is easy to see the inference from these observations. It is the duty of every one amongst us, according to his abilities and opportunity, to examine upon what foundation the doctrines of our holy religion are built. If ignorance in the ordinary affairs of life, or in those branches of knowledge which are commonly studied and understood, be esteemed reproachful, how much more justly opprobrious must it be, in affairs of such high and universal concernment? Besides, although an implicit belief in those who, by their education and condition of life, are incapable of searching into and weighing the reasons of things, may be accepted by God, who will judge every man according to the light granted to him; yet certainly it cannot have any merit in those persons who have faculties and leisure to examine and judge for themselves. Nay, there is nothing more unworthy of a reasonable man, than to give himself over to the blind guidance of custom and authority in the most important of all points, wilfully neglecting or extinguishing that light which hath been kindled up within him, by the hand of nature, to direct and conduct him.

And

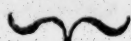


And as this study is absolutely necessary to us, so it is the most noble and excellent of all. What can be so worthy of a spiritual nature as the contemplation of the great Author of all things, of the laws which he hath given to mankind, and of that endless existence which we are assured of enjoying, when we have put off this mortal frame? Does not every object here, every hope, every fear in this transitory scene of things, vanish before so vast, so unbounded a prospect? If the wise men among the heathens could, from the light which they enjoyed, raise such noble speculations, and arrive at such sublime heights of virtue, as rendered them esteemed and honoured by all posterity, how much more pure and perfect should our knowledge and practice be, who have the cloud removed, and those doubts and perplexities cleared up, which the most sagacious heathens laboured under?

To be assured, that whatever changes this material world may undergo, we shall live for ever, not amid diseases, pain and sorrow, but in a happy and glorious immortality; that upon being removed from this earth, the seat of corruption, calumny and misery, we shall be raised to converse with angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, and be admitted into the immediate presence of the eternal Creator of the universe; what can contribute to our felicity, even in this life, so powerfully, as these considerations? Are we in circumstances of distress? How must they be alleviated, when we

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look up to that most excellent Being, under whose protection we know ourselves to be, who will make even our calamities a source of joy to us if we trust in Him? Are we in prosperity? These reflections will teach us to bear with moderation and humility successes comparatively so mean and trifling, to use them not as foundations to build injustice and insolence upon, but as instruments to do more extensive good. There is no pleasure so alluring, no evil so dreadful, no passion so violent, which a serious and habitual attention to these great doctrines of Faith will not enable us to triumph over.

It is therefore evidently our duty and interest to enquire into the grounds of our belief, and frequently to contemplate the chief articles of it, not as cavillers and bigots, but with sincerity and candour; not demanding on the one hand impossible demonstration, nor on the other satisfying ourselves with weak, with uncertain tradition. This practice will by degrees introduce settled habits of virtue, at the same time that it renders us superior to the temptations and miseries of this life, it will give us a purer relish for the enjoyments of it; it will recommend us at once to the favour of God and man, will make us become every station we are placed in here, and render us for ever happy hereafter.

That this may be the blessed lot of all that hear me, God, of his infinite Mercy, grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON





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# S E R M O N XIII.

Religion the most perfect System  
of Morality.

Preached in Trinity - College Chapel,  
*Dublin; Dec. 2, 1753.*

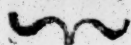
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ST. MATTHEW vii. 20.

*By their fruits ye shall know them.*

**I**N judging of a person's virtue and character, SERM.  
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we should have regard not only to his words and sentiments, but to his life and conduct. He is to be accounted a wise man who acts, not he who merely discourses, wisely. In judging concerning a system of laws or doctrines, we should proceed differently: The bad lives of those who profess themselves to be governed by them, do not prove them to be evil; a corrupt people must be unhappy under the best constitution and purest religion. We are not therefore to understand our Lord's expression in the text as some have done, that we are to form our judgment concerning the truth of a religion from the lives of its professors;  
from

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from their vices inferring its falshood. *Beware, faith he, of false prophets; ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or Figs of thistles? A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth evil fruit; wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.* That is, a religion whose tendency is evil, whose precepts contradict reason, and corrupt human nature, cannot be from God; its teachers are false prophets, wicked deceivers; but that which is reasonable, purifying the mind, and, where obeyed, promoting the happiness of men, bears so far the mark of divine authority, and, being worthy of God, becomes provable, by proper credentials, to be from Him. Hence the ill lives of Christians afford no good argument against the truth of Christianity. This is a good tree, and naturally beareth good fruit, but the bad soil in which it is planted, may pervert it, and make the fruit degenerate. If we would do justice, let us examine the law by the test here proposed by the Lawgiver: Is its tendency good? Is it reasonable? This is an important enquiry, the only foundation of a rational faith, and well worthy of our consideration, peculiarly at this solemn season, when we commemorate the coming of our Lord.

The truth of this point, that the Christian Religion is in fact agreeable to reason and human nature, I am sensible may be made out in many ways; but this place and time not admitting of diffuse reasonings, that which I now propose

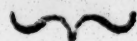
to



to lay before you, shall be as concise as possible, and though it may seem of some subtilty, it will, if attended to, I am persuaded, appear, upon the whole, convincing. The method I shall pursue is this: *First*, to shew that Morality is originally grounded in the nature and relations of reasonable beings. *Secondly*, It is a great excellence of the Christian religion, that it delivers a scheme of morality, the most pure, the most useful, the most perfect, that was ever exhibited to the world.

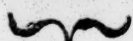
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*First*, then; Morality is originally grounded in the nature and relations of reasonable beings. By morality I do not mean a behaviour conformable only to the rules of outward decency and civil prudence, which too often passes in the world for the only morality reason teaches; a gross and pernicious error! For although this be commendable and by no means to be neglected, yet doth it fall far short of the true notion of morality, which I take to signify, a settled temper of mind, determining a man to make the best use of his faculties, that use which is most for the honour of the divine Giver, for the advantage of his fellow-creatures, and the advancement of his own happiness. This temper is nothing else but the affection of love, duly regulated and proportioned, regulated by the reason of things, and proportioned to their value: Thus *love*, as St. Paul saith, *is the fulfilling of the law*.

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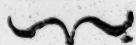
The nature of man being considered, together with the relations he stands in to God and his fellow-creatures; love is the first duty he owes both to them and to himself; a love and desire, delight and gratitude, mingled with an awful veneration with regard to his Maker, a love of good-will to other intelligent beings, and a love enlightened by wisdom, not flowing from blind instinct, to himself. Now, I say, that to this love, and, by consequence, to all the actions that are the necessary effects and genuine expressions of it, there must be an obligation antecedent in nature to all laws and precepts concerning it, whether human or divine. We are obliged to love God, not merely because He hath commanded us to love him, but because He hath made us capable of loving him, and both by his perfections and benefits deserves and claims our love. Did not these, as soon as we can make any reflection on them, oblige us to love him, no subsequent command could oblige us to it. Why else are these things, the favours conferred on us by God and the perfections of his nature, mentioned as reasons of love which no ingenuous mind can resist? For if they be good reasons for our loving God, now that He commands it, they must be equally reasons for love antecedent to any command.

Perhaps, if we examine the matter more closely, we shall find, that the very command to love God, supposes an obligation to love him prior to the command; because this love, as an affection

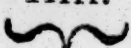


affection of the mind, hath no other proper cause and motive than the amiable qualities and kind actions of the person beloved. We do not, we cannot, love any being with a love of esteem and gratitude only, because he requires, but because he would deserve it, even though he did not require it: And therefore it seems clear to me, that the command to love God doth not directly respect the affection of love, for this is not immediately in our power, but prescribes our using those means which are proper to raise the love of God in our minds; such, among others, is the contemplation of his divine excellencies, and the relations subsisting between Him and us, as He is our Creator, Preserver and Redeemer; such also is our duty of considering and doing those things, which may be expected from all those who have the love of God dwelling in them.

It were easy, after the same manner, to shew, that an obligation to the other parts of morality, to the love of our neighbour as ourselves, and to a wise and rational love of ourselves, ariseth immediately from the relations between us and other men, and from our character, as beings whose happiness depends on our own choice and behaviour. By this obligation to such love of God, our neighbour and ourselves, and the actions naturally flowing from it, I mean, that the reason or nature of things demands it from us, that if we indulged a contrary temper and behaviour, we should be liable to the reproaches  
of

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of our own minds, we should justly draw upon ourselves the censure of others, and above all, the displeasure of the Author of our Being.

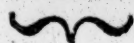
This obligation may be stiled an obligation of duty, inasmuch as love is due from men to God and to each other, and because due it is therefore enjoined by God under the sanction of rewards and punishments. God himself would not require the love and obedience of his creatures, if it was not a debt which they owed him before, and every debt implies an obligation to payment. There is beside this another obligation, and very carefully to be distinguished from it, that is an obligation of interest. It is manifestly our interest to obey God, because he can and will reward us if we obey him, and punish us if we do not; and this, being our interest, is therefore our prudence, but not, for that reason alone, our duty. On the contrary, there must be duty, the duty of love, and unlimited obedience as the consequence of love, antecedent to the command, and much more to the penalty. This is no more than saying that God, antecedent to his commanding any thing, hath a right to command it; for if there be an antecedent right on his part, there is an antecedent obligation on ours: And it is for this very reason He lays his commands, and to those commands adds threatenings, because the relation of Creator and creatures, of Benefactor and persons benefited, gives him a right to command, and obliges us to obey. Were there no obligation



tion but that of interest, there could be no duty properly so called; and where no duty is, there could be no punishment, unless it be just to punish one for not doing what he is not obliged to do, or what he would not have been obliged to do even by the command itself, had not the threatening been superadded; in which case, the threatening must be unjust, and so consequently the punishment threatened. This obligation of duty may indeed be increased by the consideration of those rewards and punishments which God hath annexed to his laws; not as these rewards and punishments immediately affect our interest and happiness, but as the promise of reward, and the delight which God takes in bestowing it, are a manifestation of the Divine Goodness, and so likewise is the threatening of punishment, it being threatened that it may not be inflicted; in which view they strengthen our obligation to love and gratitude.

This seems to be a plain account of those moral fitnesses in things, and everlasting essential differences of actions, which some have as warmly and unaccountably denied, as others have strongly argued for. All rational beings are moral agents; such an agent is man, capable of discerning a difference in actions, that some are suitable to his nature, others not; and of choosing according to this difference. Now there being such a difference between things and actions, as to their agreement or disagreement

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ment with his rational nature between gratitude to God and ingratitude, there is a manifest fitness in some and unfitness in others, which fitnesses or unfitnesses, as far as the former are the objects of choice, the latter of a deliberate dislike, and both are free, may be justly called moral, because they regard moral agents, considered in their moral capacity; and these moral agents are properly obliged to govern themselves by these fitnesses, because, if they do not, they become worthy of blame.

Nor does this notion of moral fitnesses and obligations, not depending upon will and pleasure, but necessarily resulting from the nature and reason of things, at all derogate from the honour of the Deity. On the contrary, the moral unchangeable perfections of God, furnish us with the best proofs we have of this unchangeable difference in things. It hath been asked, Could not God have framed us the contrary of what we are, so that we should have been delighted with vice and have abhorred virtue? In which case, would not vice have been virtue, virtue vice? To which we answer, that could not be, without overthrowing our clearest notions; an essentially good Being cannot be supposed to form reasonable creatures necessarily evil. Now this would not be said if there were nothing originally fit and right, because then his willing it would alone make it fit and right. Was it fit, from the beginning, that God should govern his creatures by rules suitable



able to their natures? Grant this, and it will follow, that it was also fit that they should govern themselves by those rules. Why is it we ascribe Justice and Mercy to God? Because we think they imply perfection, and are therefore suitable to his nature; and if to his, to ours also; the perfection of every reasonable being consisting in the imitation of God. SERM.  
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I do not, however, call these fitnesses of things a law which supposes a superior; they obtain the force of a law then only, when they have the sanction and seal of the Divine command. Neither is it to be inferred from any thing said, that God hath not a right to lay upon us any positive laws he pleases: On the contrary, these very fitnesses of things enforce upon us the duty of unlimited obedience to him, our Creator, and greatest, wisest Benefactor.

They who maintain the opposite opinion, who derive all right and wrong from the positive appointment of God, use a dangerous method of arguing. That virtue, say they, which is grounded on this eternal difference of things, must be very feeble and precarious, as its foundation is uncertain and imaginary; but the commandment of God is a firm, a solid basis; we obey him, because we know that he will reward us hereafter, and punish the disobedient. This is to make self-interest the only principle of virtue; whereas, it seems to me, that of itself it cannot be a principle of virtue at all; a concurring motive it may be, and, properly

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perly limited, is right; but whatever is done solely for private advantage, cannot be duty, cannot be virtue; in common life it is never esteemed such; on the contrary, the highest degree of virtue consists in controlling this principle, its noblest efforts appear where self seems to be forgotten. Compare these two opinions; one resolves all morality into the positive will of God, prescribes obedience to this will because there is a reward annexed to it; to disobedience, punishment: The other grounds this distinction of good and evil on the original difference of things and actions, and obliges us to select what is good from our nature as reasonable Beings, to make the love of God, of other men, a sense of our own dignity and regard for our happiness, the principles of our conduct. We cannot hesitate between these opinions: This latter is the voice of reason, the voice of nature.

Thus morality is originally grounded in our nature, and in the relations we bear as reasonable beings. And *secondly*, it is the excellence of the Christian religion, that it delivers the purest, the most useful, the most perfect scheme of morality that ever was. To be convinced of this we need only consult the sacred writings in which this revelation is contained. Where is the Majesty of Almighty God represented with such grandeur? Where are his Goodness and Mercy set forth in a light so amiable? What more just, more fit, than the duty which he there requires



requires from us, to love, to trust in him, to lay all our wants before him, to return thanks and praises, to have our hearts filled with reverence and gratitude, and express these inward sentiments by obedience to his laws? Where is good-will to our fellow creatures so powerfully recommended? We are exhorted to do as we would be done by, to defend the oppressed, to instruct the ignorant, to set right the misguided, to relieve the indigent; nay, we are to forgive injuries, to return good for evil, to pray for those that despitefully use and persecute us. And what religion ever prescribed such a wise and well-regulated love of ourselves, such a care of our immortal part, such a government of our passions and appetites, such sobriety and diligence, such temperance and chastity, such purity even of heart and thought, such steadiness and intrepidity in the cause of truth? And all these it does not only lay down and enjoin, but it enforceth on us by the promise of eternal rewards, and by the threatenings of endless punishments; sanctions the most powerful, which it could enter into the heart of man to conceive. Such a morality as this, so recommended and enforced, is certainly a great honour to our religion; for it is evident, that the Author of Nature cannot but conspire with the nature of things; so that it is alike impossible, that he should not command such things as are morally fit and becoming, and that he should command any thing in the least morally unfit. Wherefore the doc-

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trine of Christ never appearing so excellent as when tried by this test, hath one very considerable mark of its being a divine religion, and leaves no place for reasonable doubt that it is so, when the other arguments for its truth, taken from prophecies and miracles, are added to this. It is said, indeed, that this morality was from the beginning, that the precepts of Christianity are as old as the creation: Granting this, how is it an objection against its usefulness? The question is not, Is a doctrine new; but Is it right, beneficial? Was it hitherto unknown, unattended to? Before the revelation of the Gospel, its precepts were not perhaps all known to any, many were never known to all; Jesus Christ republisheth this law, revives forgotten truth, removes universal error, restores light and order, adds authority and sanctions. Is not this a great and happy change, an inestimable benefit to mankind? Have we not reason to return God thanks for having disclosed to us a religion so excellent? We should hail the rising of this Sun of Righteousness, who hath brought upon us so glorious a light, and celebrate his coming into the world with joy, as did the Jews when he made his entry into *Jerusalem*, as upon this day, in his regal character, spreading their garments and strowing branches in his way, and crying *Hosannah to the Son of David; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.*

From



From what hath been said we may draw a few short inferences. We see, and should avoid the error of some who, through a sincere but indiscreet zeal, declare themselves enemies to reason in all religious matters. These, thinking to exalt, dishonour, intending to build up, they beat down, revelation, which is best supported by reason; and Christianity never shines so brightly as when examined by its most piercing beam. This heavenly light descends not to extinguish, but to rekindle the natural flame.

*Farther*; Are there any doctrines which, instead of inspiring and cherishing the love of God, tend to damp that divine affection, to raise a servile tormenting fear, endless doubts and jealousies, to darken our contemplations of God, and fill the mind with gloomy apprehensions, to harden the heart, and weaken the generous humane affections; are there any such doctrines? Let us not be hasty in giving credit to them; such consequences cannot follow from truth, which is ever uniform and consistent. We should no less avoid the opposite error of those who, aspiring to an impossible perfection, think all regard to self-interest inconsistent with virtue. If the others sink below, these soar above, the level of reason. Religion proposes to us both motives; lovely in herself she commands, leading to happiness she deserves, our choice. God hath joined virtue and interest,

SERM. obedience and reward, let no man seek to put  
XIII them asunder.

These mistakes arise from not attending to the difference between moral and natural good. Moral good is that which intelligent beings are by their nature and reason obliged to chuse, are worthy of blame if they do not. This moral good hath farther a tendency to promote their happiness; in this respect it is a natural good. These two are therefore, although inseparable, clearly distinguishable, and should not be confounded. In chusing moral good, we may have regard to its being a natural good, but if we have regard to this alone, we do not act morally.

A practical inference is; We are directed in the text to judge of men *by their fruits*. Let us apply this rule to ourselves; let us take care that our lives be suitable to the holy religion we profess; erring with the advantage of so much better knowledge, we shall be the more inexcusable.

*Farther*; Let us endeavour to build our obedience upon the true foundation, upon considering the several relations we bear as reasonable creatures, upon the love of God, good-will towards men, a proper regard to our own happiness, strengthened by the additional seal of God's Authority, commanding, promising, threatening. This is the obedience of a rational



tional being, who acts from noble, generous, just motives.

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*Lastly*; Let us not only obey, but preserve, the appearance likewise of obedience. He who seeks the appearance of virtue without the reality, is an hypocrite; he who, possessing the reality, neglects the appearance, is, in that respect, a bad member of society, offending, or even corrupting others. Let us be and seem good: The first shall recommend us to God, the second to our fellow-citizens, and it is a part of our duty to seek their approbation by honest arts. Our example may likewise induce them to imitate our worth; it may be useful to the cause of religion, proving, by the fruits, the goodness of the tree which produceth them.

Which, that we may all do, God of his Infinite Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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## S E R M O N XIV.

Universal Obligation to Works of  
Benevolence.

Preached at St. Catherine's, Dublin;  
March 31, 1754.

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R O M A N S xii. 6.

*We being many are one body in Christ, and every one  
members one of another.*

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**T**HERE is not any fault which is attended with worse consequences, yet there are few more common than that of confining one's views entirely to self. *My own interest, my own convenience, my own pleasure,* is sometimes the language, too often the sole object and aim of each. Reason indeed might correct this error; but, against strong passion, how unequal a match is reason, especially in the multitude? It is the glory of the Christian religion, that it enlarges the mind, opens it to nobler prospects, and kindles in the heart of every believer, a generous flame of universal good-will.

The



The reasoning of St. *Paul* in the text and following verses, is very strong to this purpose, the substance of which may be thus collected. All men are derived from the same Parent, the workmanship of the same great Creator, and partakers of the same nature; we Christians have a relation yet nearer, redeemed by the same Saviour, we are heirs of the same salvation: Thus are we intimately connected with each other, members of the same body, and closely united in the same interest. From hence he deduces our duty: *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love: Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Distributing to the necessity of saints; put on bowels of compassion and kindness, meekness and long suffering.*

Nothing can be of greater use than a right understanding of, and due attention to, these precepts; this important law of charity, which is the characteristic and distinguishing mark of our holy religion. Let us therefore, following the Apostle's steps from the consideration of our nature and condition here, endeavour to explain and confirm this law. But as charity is a comprehensive term, containing many duties, I shall confine my present discourse to the most necessary and principal part of it, works of compassion and mercy.

These I call the most necessary part of charity, because men might subsist tolerably well, although there were not in the breast of any other person a principle of love prompting to rejoice in,

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in, or contribute to their good fortune : But life would be insufferable without the assistance of pity, to mitigate or support, under the many calamities incident to our mortal state.

Works of compassion I call likewise the principal part of charity, because there are few who may not do good in this way. To contribute to the successes of others requires bounty and liberality, virtues not attainable without some degree of power or riches ; but there is scarcely any so low and indigent, who may not relieve from a pressing necessity, or turn away an impending danger.

This being premised, I proceed in the design proposed, and shall endeavour to prove, *first*, That works of compassion are reasonable and our duty. *Secondly*, I shall deduce from the words of the text some particular practical remarks, and conclude with an application to the present occasion.

That works of compassion are, in general, reasonable, appears from hence, because compassion is a principle implanted in our nature, and interwoven with the original frame of our souls.

The first motions of pity are involuntary. Reason indeed may, and should afterwards direct them, but it neither raises nor can it suppress them at will. We are carried away by a power which we cannot restrain ; we are moved, we are melted, by the sufferings of the unhappy, become anxious, uneasy, eager to relieve



lieve or fly from him. What judgment shall we form of a principle so powerful? It is not custom, because it finds place in the most savage minds; amidst the loudest storm of passions, there is still some interval in which the soft voice of pity is heard. It is not feebleness of soul, because it is strongest in the most firm and generous; it is not prejudice, because universal, and found in all men: It is the voice of nature, the voice of God within us, exhorting, commanding us to the performance of humane, generous actions.

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This being proved, that compassion is a natural principle, it follows, that the works it leads to are reasonable: We argue thus: In every rank of creatures about us, there is a peculiar frame or constitution, by which it is fitted to obtain certain ends. The perfection of each creature consists in acting agreeably to this constitution, and obtaining these ends: So it is in man. We have various powers and principles of action, each fitted to its peculiar end, all under the guidance of reason and conscience. This is human nature. The due conduct of these powers and principles, one of which we have determined compassion to be, is acting according to nature, is fit and reasonable.

If we search more deeply into this matter, we shall discover marks of excellent wisdom in the frame of our nature, with relation to this affection. Compassion is always attended with some degree

SERM. degree of pain. A person in misery moves, af-  
 XIV. fects, distresseth you.

There is a contagion in grief, which seizes on the stander-by. Our hearts are, as it were, tuned to each other, if the heavy hand of affliction strike one, the others tremble. Now in all other cases we fly from pain; do we here? The very contrary, we run in crowds to spectacles of deep distress; we court occasions of pity; we enjoy our sorrow, and feel pleasure springing from the midst of pain. How shall we account for this singular perfection? It was necessary, first that compassion should be painful, because it acts upon us by this pain: My attention is caught, my heart opens to the call of misery by the pain it excites in me; remove this pain, few would listen. But then, lest we should avoid all such objects, this pain hath annexed and inseparably twisted with it a soft tender pleasure, which, amid sighs, and groans, and tears, still draws on the heart by an irresistible charm, and afterwards leaves upon the mind the most agreeable impressions. Doth not this disposition bear the marks of wise contrivance? And shall we not judge that to be reasonable, for which the Almighty hath made such singular provision?

Thus works of compassion are reasonable, it follows, since we are reasonable creatures, that they are also our duty.

The pleasure mentioned may indeed arise partly, from reflecting that we are free from the evils



evils we behold; but this is not its only, nor chief cause, for it is sudden, and is evidently antecedent to all such reflection. Beside, if it were so, the pleasure would not be increased, as it manifestly is, by removing the evil. Is this pleasure our only, or chief motive to charitable acts? It cannot be; because we assist and relieve without thinking of such pleasure or of any reward, prompted by nature, not through hope or expectation.

Would you have a more direct proof? Look into your own hearts: Is the following a true representation of what passes there? You have met with an innocent person in great calamity; you have relieved him: What is the state of your mind hereupon? Are you not pleased, delighted, elevated with conscious virtue? This is the universal, the unchangeable judgment of our minds: Now, what, from whence, is this inward feeling? Is it not an evidence within us, attesting that we have done our duty?

Take the argument the other way, it is still stronger. One hath refused relief to the unhappy, perhaps hath aggravated his sufferings by harshness and reproach. Look back on this behaviour; you cannot but disapprove, sometimes feel sharp remorse. What shall we call this? Is it not a full conviction that we have transgressed our duty? This is farther confirmed by uneasiness of another kind; a secret expectation of punishment almost perpetual in such cases. What is it that hath armed conscience with

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with those regrets and fears, those adders and scorpions, that sting and rend the inhuman breast? Is it not nature, is it not the God of nature, enforcing our obligation to works of charity.

After what hath been said, shall we give ear to those, who assert compassion to be mere weakness, that it should be subdued and suppressed? God indeed, all perfect, also perhaps the highest order of angels may be free from pity. Pure spirits have not our appetites and passions, subsisting by ways more perfect. Are we therefore to reject them? Vanity and folly! Man, as every other rank of being, hath a perfection suited to his nature; this we should come as near to as possible, beyond this we cannot rise; our appetites and passions, guided by reason, lead to this end: Hence human perfection consists not in extinguishing, which is impossible, but in a due regulation of them.

*Again*; Shall we say that compassion is mere self-love? Do we succour distress, because we fear it may be our own? It cannot be: For we are not at all conscious of any such apprehension. Children also, who have no such fears, do yet pity; neither are the most fearful usually the most generous. Besides, doth not every day's experience confute this supposition? The moment a person, in grievous calamity, is presented to your eyes, is not your heart within you seized, touched, melted? Do you not adopt his



his sorrows? you even breathe his sighs, utter his groans, mingle tears with tears, give up your time, substance, safety, to his service. Self vanishes for some moments: You are not your own; you are interwoven with, you become, as it were, the sufferer.

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I hope these proofs from our own frame and nature will not appear difficult and nice. They are indeed most conclusive, and of a kind well deserving your attention. Our duty is impressed on our hearts; we may not only read, we feel it there; and the struggles we feel in doing an unjust or uncharitable action, are a strong proof that such act is a breach of our duty; it is the voice of God within us, as truly as if an angel from Heaven should proclaim the divine will in thunder to our astonished ears.

To give these reasonings, however, the fullest brightness and force, we have added the positive command of God in his revealed will. Indeed there is no precept more frequently, nor more strongly insisted upon than this in Holy Scripture. Thus our Lord commands us: *Be ye merciful as your Father in Heaven is merciful.* Again, *This is my commandment, that ye love one another.* To do good, saith the Apostle, and to distribute forget not. for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Charity, saith St. Peter, shall cover a multitude of sins. Cast thy bread upon the waters, saith Solomon, for thou shalt find it after many days; that is, do good offices to the poor where you have not probability nor expectation of any return, (which

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(which is expressed by casting bread upon the waters) nevertheless your bounty shall be recompensed in the end. And our Blessed Saviour saith, *Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that they may receive you into everlasting habitations*; that is, make such use of the riches you possess here, that you may be entitled to an eternal reward hereafter. Conformably to the expression in the text, St Paul, in another place, says, *We are members one of another; be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted.*

We have now seen that works of compassion are reasonable, and that they are our duty; we have proved it from the inward feelings of our own hearts, from the voice of God speaking in the frame of our nature, and in his will revealed from Heaven.

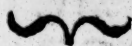
Let us now proceed to deduce from the text some observations, which may be useful in practice, and apply them to the present occasion.

*First*; A more particular explanation of the words will best introduce what I have to say. *We are every one members one of another.* As the several parts of our bodies, although variously situated, though different in their frame and offices, do yet partake of the same life, have a strict connection and fellow-feeling; so that any injury to one in some manner affects and hurts all the rest; in like manner, all men are partakers of the same nature, derived from the same origin, formed with the same faculties, and



and capacity of happiness or misery ; we Christians are yet more closely connected, redeemed by the same Saviour, baptized into the same faith, we are called to the same immortal inheritance, however different in rank, circumstances, station, we form one great body, under our divine Lawgiver and Redeemer, and thus are connected by the strictest ties of nature and religion ; we are to behave ourselves therefore suitably to this relation ; we must enlarge our notions, we must stretch them beyond the narrow compass of *self*, of our own families, our acquaintance, raise them to sentiments of public good, a love of our country ; nay we are to embrace all mankind within the extensive circle of our good-will, to love human nature. Hence, far be from us all little distinctions of friendship, party, sect, even of country : Man, in whatsoever situation he is, must be the object of good-will ; especially, all that are in misery have a right to compassion. Is he a stranger that is in distress, a foreigner, one of an opposite party or different form of religion ? Is he even an enemy ? Pass not by on the other side ; assist, comfort him. Most admirable and excellent religion ! which makes our greatest interest our duty, which raises, improves, ennobles our nature, renders every man a friend to every other, and opens sources of goodness in every breast, to overflow in healthful refreshing streams on the weak and wretched. O how blessed would mankind be,

Q. How blessed would mankind be, if

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if all acted with a becoming conformity to the sublime precepts of that holy faith which they profess!

*Secondly*; Who are they whom it is most needful to remind of the truth contained in the text? Who are most prone to forget it? The rich: Their affluence shuts out such thoughts from their minds; they are intent upon increasing or enjoying their possessions; not having felt the evils, they regard not the complaints, of the poor. Those also who are prosperous and powerful; success fills the mind with vain thoughts, with overweening opinion of our own worth, and inspires a contempt of the low and obscure, as if they were of an inferior nature. Those likewise who enjoy health and youth, who are full of life and vigour, they know not what it is to languish under calamities, poverty and pain. The young, gay spirit melts not at sorrows it scarcely apprehends, but is apt to fly from such melancholy scenes into the embraces of vain delusive pleasures. All such ought to reflect upon the truth before us, *that we are members one of another*. These are their fellow-creatures, their brethren; it is wrong, it is unmanly, it is unnatural to neglect them. You behold labourers in the same field, one tired, exhausted, faints, sinks under his burthen; his fellows, fresh and vigorous, look on, mock his groans, and refuse to lend a finger toward lightening his load. You behold fellow-travellers, one having spent his stock of provisions, is ready to die through hunger and weakness,



ness, his fellows, abounding in superfluity, deny him a morsel, and suffer him to famish before their eyes: You look on these men with horror, you pronounce them detestable monsters; yet are not the uncharitable all guilty in the same way? Think well of this, ye who, having to spare, suffer your brethren to pine in want and in sickness.

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*Thirdly;* The expression in the text, *we being many are one body in Christ*, leads us to consider ourselves as under the government of Jesus Christ, our head and Lord. What are his dispensations towards us and our fellow-creatures? Did he suffer death for the redemption of the rich alone? Does he bestow his Grace, and will he open the gates of Heaven to such only? We are assured of the contrary; all his mercies, all his promises, equally extend to the poor and the humble. What then should our behaviour to such be? Are not these, the objects of his love, entitled to our care and tenderness? Relying solely upon his mercy, ought we not to shew mercy?

The allusion of the text is true in a sense not yet taken notice of. Besides our natural and religious connexion with other men, we are affected by their evils, their faults and follies, as joined in society. The vices of the rich and powerful strike at the vitals of the community. Those of the poor, though not so quickly perceived, have their certain ill influence, and by de-

SERM. grees spread pain and disorder through the  
XIV. whole body. Possess yourself of wealth, dignity,  
power, to what height you please, you cannot  
enjoy it without some degree of industry and virtue in the lower rank, without the servant, the husbandman, the artificer. Are all these unskilful and dishonest? There can be nothing in any rank but misery.

You easily see the use I would make of this last observation. We should not despise nor refuse pity to the poor and the indigent, this hath been proved to be unreasonable and unchristian; it is also imprudent and unpolitick, hurts, with ourselves, the society. Hence, as it is our duty to relieve their distresses, so is it more especially if we can, to prevent their vices. Is there any instance in which both these works of compassion meet? It must be excellent: Of this kind is the education of poor children; helpless, innocent, you relieve their wants, you preserve their innocence. This being the kind of charity now recommended to you, permit me to open it more fully.

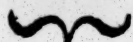
The vices of the lower sort are owing chiefly to the want of proper education. They have the same faculties with those of higher rank, instruction makes the difference. Barbarism and low vices are found in uneducated quality, while civility and generosity of mind are discovered at the plow and in the shop of the mechanic. Young creatures, born of poor parents, grow up untaught, hence they become idle, lazy, and by consequence



sequence wicked ; prompted on the one hand by encreasing necessities, on the other by evil passions and habits, they too often become the pests of society. This is the chief cause which infests our public roads with violence ; this makes our streets resound with blasphemies, wounds our ears and eyes with sounds and spectacles of misery, fills our prisons with criminals, and not seldom cuts off the wicked lives of such wretches by the just rigour of the laws. Now, how may these evils be in a great measure prevented ? By making a good education universal. Poor children, who cannot have this advantage from their parents, must depend upon others for it, and the merit of contributing to it is undoubtedly great.

This kind of merit you, my brethren, have, in a considerable degree, from your annual bounty here ; and must reflect with pleasure on its good effects.

And can we refuse, can we doubt to persevere in encouraging a design so pious, useful and humane ? Let us from hence take an occasion of enlarging our views ; the prospect may be useful ; if it lead us out of our way, it is only to bring us back to it with advantage. There is not one who hears me that does not love, or affect to love, his country. Let us then consider what has been, what is, our public condition. What mighty dangers have we of late years escaped ? We heard, and only heard, of wars and earthquakes ; a contagious distemper

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that swept away vast numbers of cattle in almost every part of Europe, raged in our neighbouring nation, nor is yet wholly extinguished : Had either of these invaded us, slaughter or famine must have soon laid desolate this island ; in the mean time we enjoyed peace and plenty. But did we not abuse them ? Did not luxury grow up among us ? When were expences in building, furniture, equipage, entertainments, apparel, play, public spectacles, carried to such a height ? The infection spread through all ranks ; all had an ambition to live above their abilities ; hence the rich, to supply their extravagancies, came to oppress the poor ; the poor to defraud the rich ; and what is the consequence ? A decay of industry, of trade, of public credit, sudden poverty and general distrust. These are sad, but known truths ; they deserve, they demand serious attention ; and where, which are the remedies ? *First*, we all believe in God and his Providence, we should therefore render him favourable by the love and observance of his holy religion, of late fatally neglected. We should *next* apply ourselves to cultivate two great and now unfashionable virtues, Industry and Frugality, the only sources of public and private wealth. And *thirdly*, to come closer to my subject, all of you, according to your rank, take care to educate your children well, that is, religiously and virtuously ; train them up in diligence, modesty and temperance. You cannot bestow upon them a more valuable gift than a  
right



right education, nor leave them a better legacy ; you cannot more effectually secure your own and their happiness, nor confer a greater benefit on the public.

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By the same principle, those unhappy children who, by loss of parents, or by having poor, profligate or unnatural parents, are shut out from this advantage of good education, ye should, each in proportion to his ability, contribute to bring up aright. This care must, by natural consequence, produce much public good, and yet more by religious consequence, calling down upon us the favour of God, who delighteth to stile himself the *God of Mercy and Charity*.

It is a common complaint that the present age is very corrupt, a complaint I fear too just ; yet we have still much ground of hope and comfort, from the abounding of this excellent virtue of *Charity* among us, many instances of which we behold of late years sprung, and still springing up, in this city.

*Solomon*, in the book of *Proverbs*, represents Wisdom as sitting at the gates of the city, as lifting up her voice in the public places, and inviting all men to come to her and receive instruction. May we not, in like manner, imagine Charity, the queen of Christian graces, appearing among us, and calling out in words like these, "Come to me all you who are maimed and wounded, who labour under sickness and poverty ; I have prepared houses for re-

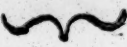
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“ceiving you; I have made ready my medicines; I have directed humane and skilful persons to bestow their care and art in relieving you. You, whose understanding lunacy disturbs or frenzy overturns, deplorable melancholy objects, come to me, I have raised mansions for you; my sons wait to administer comfort, and if it be the will of the Most High, to rekindle the extinguished beam of reason. You whom Providence, mysterious but just in all its ways, hath afflicted with incurable diseases, come to me, I will hide you from the eye of the public, will lead you with a friendly hand to the end of your dark pilgrimage, will ease your last agonies, and soften the horrors of unavoidable death. Come to me, ye pregnant mothers, unhappy women! whom poverty surroundeth in so dangerous a conjuncture; I will support you in that hour of peril, and preserve with you your innocent burthen, too likely, otherwise, to perish on the threshold of life. Ye little children on whom your parents, bred up in Popery and laziness, are about to entail both, come to me; the land abounds with the schools I have raised for your instruction in religion and industry.

“And these children now before you, supplicants for your bounty, I recommend to all here present. Weak, innocent, helpless, without parent, without friend, without protector, which way shall they turn them?  
“Whither



“ Whither fly for refuge? Ignorance, idleness, SERM.  
“ vice lye in wait for them. O let not selfish XIV.  
“ passions, vanity, love of money, stifle the   
“ motions of pity in your breasts! Take them  
“ up, clothe, instruct, teach them piety and in-  
“ dustry. Would you obtain pleasure to your  
“ own minds? What so pleasing as to do good?  
“ Would you benefit the public? Make these  
“ useful members of it by diligence and ho-  
“ nesty. Would you derive down advantages  
“ to posterity? Educate these, provide in them  
“ faithful servants, honest workmen, skilful  
“ artificers for your children. Would you be  
“ happy and thrive in the world? Save these;  
“ God will favour and enrich the liberal soul,  
“ with the blessings of the poor, of the widow,  
“ of the orphan.”

Listen to truth; consult strict reason; can any thing be more fit, more reasonable, more worthy of a man, of a Christian, more pleasing to your own consciences, more estimable in the sight of God and wise men, than to preserve the bodies and souls of young innocent creatures, who, although forsaken by fortune, are partakers with you of the same nature, and heirs of the same hope of a blessed immortality?

The approaching season of abstinence and mortification furnisheth additional motives to the exercise of this virtue and charity.

We are to retire from the world, to look within and know ourselves. What can better fit us  
for

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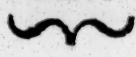
for the performance hereof, than conversing with distress, contemplating weakness and calamity? What can better fit and dispose us to abandon the gay follies and empty pleasures about us, to mortify our passions, and subdue our appetites, than the making ourselves acquainted with the sorrows that swell in the heart and stream from the eyes of the poor and unfortunate? When we raise up the humble, befriend the destitute, educate the orphan, feed the hungry, then, indeed, shall our humiliation, our prayers, our fasting, be a worthy and acceptable sacrifice. Hear the words of God himself, by his Prophet, on this point: *Is not this the fast I have chosen, to deal thy bread to the hungry; and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh.* And surely this is the exercise of the purest virtues human nature is capable of, which raise it to some resemblance of the Divine, *whose mercies are over all his works.* A subject thus useful and agreeable, hath, I fear, deceived me into too great a length; I shall add but one observation of very great importance to us all.

Let me exhort you to elevate your minds with me: To follow me beyond the scene of this life, which shall soon be closed. Imagine yourselves spectators of the last most awful of all solemnities. Behold the powers of Heaven are shaken, the last trumpet sounds, the earth quakes, the last



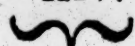
graves are opened, we are all assembled before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. You hear the voice of the Almighty Judge speaking in this manner :

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“ Ye, to whom I have bestowed the good  
“ things of the earth, account for them : How  
“ have ye employed my gifts ? In luxury, in  
“ vanity, in the gratification of all your appe-  
“ tites and passions. Ungrateful and foolish  
“ men ! who have never tasted the purest plea-  
“ sure of the human heart, to make happy !  
“ Where are the distressed, the sick, the orphan,  
“ you have relieved, comforted, protected ?  
“ Behold the books are open. There is no re-  
“ cord of one prayer put up for you, one blef-  
“ sing pronounced upon you by the poor, the  
“ fatherless, the widow. Depart from me. Un-  
“ merciful, ye shall find no mercy.” What con-  
sternation, what horror, what confusion shall  
fall upon those to whom these terrible words  
are directed !

On the other hand, words cannot express  
your joy, when he shall say to you, “ You who  
“ who have been good and charitable, draw  
“ near. The prayers of the unfortunate, the  
“ poor and friendless, put up for you, have been  
“ heard. They are recorded in the book of  
“ life. Behold those on my right hand, my ap-  
“ proved servants, who are about to ascend  
“ with me into my kingdom. These are the  
“ friendless you have assisted, these are the or-  
“ phans

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“ phans you have educated, whom you rescued  
“ from ignorance and idleness, and trained up  
“ in piety and industry. Next under God, they  
“ owe their present happy state to your goodness. See with what earnestness, what joy in  
“ their countenances, they stretch out their arms  
“ to receive, to thank, to bless you, their kind  
“ benefactors. Come, *good and faithful servants,*  
“ *enter ye into the joy of our Lord.*

O! my brethren, what a gracious, what a transporting sentence is this! Let us lay hold on the present opportunity of doing good. Let us farther, through our whole lives, by piety to God and charity to men, endeavour to deserve, and hear pronounced upon us, this sentence.

Which God, of his mercy, grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON



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# S E R M O N   X V .

Public Thanksgiving to God its  
great Excellency and Importance.

Preached in the Chapel of Trinity-College,  
*Dublin; Nov. 5, 1756.*

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P S A L M   c v i i .   8 .

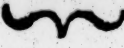
*O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness,  
and declare the wonders that he doth for the chil-  
dren of men !*

**T**HE most noble and pure part of devo-  
tion is that which consists in returning  
thanks and praise to our great Crea-  
tor. The imploring forgiveness of sins, the  
appeasing God's wrath, and praying that his  
just judgments may be turned away from us,  
tend immediately to our own welfare, and spring  
naturally from a concern for ourselves; where-  
as the duty of praise is pure and disinterested.  
The effusions of a heart filled with love and  
gratitude, the overflowings of a mind thorough-  
ly pierced with a lively sense of excellence in the  
object which it contemplates, have something  
in

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in them truly generous and sublime. This is the Devotion of angels, who having no sin to atone for, no misery to dread, no new accession of happiness to pray for, encircle the divine throne with perpetual hymns and praises.

As this duty is the noblest part of prayer, it is also the most delightful. When we prostrate ourselves before the throne of grace, bewailing our sins and weaknesses, acknowledging our wants and miseries, and humbly beseeching pardon and assistance; fit, and reasonable, and pleasing, as this duty is, there is still something of bitterness mixed with it, something, in the survey of our own follies, mortifying to us, and, in the view of an offended, though merciful, Deity, that strikes awe and terror into the mind. In thanksgiving every thing is pleasing. We consider God as dispensing mercies and blessings, as our Creator, our Preserver, our Protector; and ourselves as favoured, and, in some sort, approved of by him. These are reflections which have no mixture, no allay of bitterness in them, which wake only pleasing and delightful passions, and fill the mind with bright and chearful prospects.

In order, therefore, to lay before you more fully a duty of this importance, I shall treat of it in the following manner: *First*, I shall prove it to be fit and reasonable: *Secondly*, I shall show what should be the chief object of it: And *thirdly*, I shall mention some inferences relative  
to



to the day we commemorate, which naturally follow from these considerations.

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*First*, then, that this duty is fit and reasonable. This might be made sufficiently evident, by showing that it is a duty commanded by God, it being certain, that whatever he requires of us, must be founded upon just motives, although we should not be able perfectly to discover them. But besides this, if we enquire into the matter, we shall find good and wise reasons for this injunction.

It may seem, at first sight, that this tribute is unworthy of a Being infinitely perfect. Is it to be supposed that He can receive any pleasure from the praises and acknowledgments of such weak, fallible creatures as we are? Too great an attention to glory, and a fondness for it, is esteemed a weakness in man. How unreasonable then must it be to ascribe it to God, in whom is no shadow of imperfection; and how unsuitable is it to the Divine Nature?

It must be acknowledged, that God can receive no addition to his happiness from our service, nor doth he need our praises to display and manifest his glory; but the same reasoning will hold with regard to every human virtue, as well as to this particular duty, for it is equally clear, that our obedience cannot be of use to him in any case. But as from the Bounty and Goodness of his Nature, he is pleased with communicating happiness, and hath created us for  
that

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that end; we are therefore to look for the foundations of his commands, not in his, which is impossible, but in our own, advantage. He hath enabled us to discern clearly our true interest, and to pursue the means leading to it; and besides, the more effectually to prevent our straying from it, hath added to it the sanction of his Authority, commanding us to do what we cannot, without our own destruction, neglect.

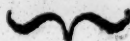
In order then to see how reasonable this duty of praise and thanksgiving is, let us consider in what respects the practice of it is useful, and the neglect of it must be pernicious to ourselves. *First*; the exercise of this duty is a necessary act of justice, without which it is impossible that society should subsist. Virtue, wherever it is, by the law of our nature, commands our esteem, and, in our fellow-creatures, where it is ever mingled with faults and imperfections, acquires our love and respect; nor can we, without injustice, withhold from it all proper marks of this our approbation; as indeed envy, ill-nature, or some vicious passion, can only prompt us to refuse them. Much more surely must the Author of the universe, all-perfect and excellent, fill our hearts with love and veneration towards him, and be more justly entitled to the strongest and most earnest expressions of them. This, it is true, can bring no advantage to him, but it is fit, and right, and reasonable in the nature of things, and therefore should be done by us. The same law which commands us to render  
to



to every man what is due to him, teaches equally, that obedience, honour and praise should be paid by us to the great Creator of all things.

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*Secondly*; The neglect of this duty is a very high degree of ingratitude, the basest and most pernicious of vices. He who is indebted to another for any signal benefit, for support and protection, or relief from a pressing calamity, is bound, by all the ties of reason and virtue, to take every opportunity of rendering himself useful to his benefactor. The person who acteth otherwise, betrays a mean and evil mind; he is insensible of the first and strongest obligations upon human nature, and is an enemy to society, inasmuch as he contributes, so far as in him lies, to stop up the fountain of liberality, and lays a discouragement upon kindness and generosity; for they who desire no return, would refuse any, except, however, a grateful mind. Now, if we apply this reasoning to the relation which we bear to our Creator, we shall see how black a crime it would be in us to retain no sense, to make no acknowledgment of the numberless favours which He confers upon us. Could it be supposed, that there were a Being of equal perfection with him in the universe, to whom we should have no tie, no obligation, nevertheless we should be obliged to honour and esteem him for his excellence, and it would be blindness and folly in us to do otherwise. But if we add to this, that we are wholly de-

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pendent on this Being; that our life, every moment it is continued to us, every comfort, all our happiness, is his free gift, ingratitude to Him must surely be a crime of a much deeper dye than it could be to any man whatever.

*Besides*; Must not such ingratitude naturally tend to corrupt our minds, and make us ungrateful to men also? For certainly it cannot be supposed, that he who passes by with negligence the many favours received from the hand of Providence, shall have any sense of benefits conferred upon him by his fellow-creatures, so much inferior to the other in number and degree; but having violated the highest point of duty, he will easily break through a less considerable part.

*Thirdly*; This duty is most useful to us, as it contributes greatly to preserve our virtue, and guard us from the temptations of vice. Exclusive of the obligation upon us to the practice of virtue, arising from its natural fitness to promote the happiness of mankind; there is another flowing from the will and appointment of our Creator, who, from his Wisdom and Goodness, hath an undoubted right to prescribe laws to us, and to punish us for the violation of them. The forming therefore to ourselves right notions of the perfections of this Being, of our duty towards him, and the fixing in our minds a deep sense of the benefits derived from him, must certainly conduce very much to preserve us in the obedience of his laws. And how can this be done more effectually



ally than by frequently contemplating his Goodness, and returning thanks solemnly for the inestimable benefits received from him? This will lay before us the strongest motives to obedience, and, by frequent repetition, make such impressions upon our hearts, as shall not be speedily erased.

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Such considerations naturally elevate the soul, and, by accustoming our minds to enlarged and generous ideas, enable us to reject the allurements of vice with disdain and contempt; or if we should sink under any temptation, this habitual sense of God's Goodness, and of the excellence of his laws, will raise such remorse in our minds, as may be effectual to preserve us afterwards from the like transgression.

A soul, polluted by impure desires, or disturbed by violent passions, cannot join sincerely in this duty of thanksgiving. It must have been, in some degree, cleansed from the impurity of sin before it can make any effort this way; and, if it continue this exercise, it must be still farther removed from the temptations of the world, it must endeavour to obtain the approbation of that Deity, whose bounty it so fervently, so frequently, acknowledges.

To all these considerations we may add, that praise and thanksgiving are in themselves a most delightful employment. Love and gratitude are the most agreeable of all our affections. When our heart is full fraught with the sense of benefits received, it cannot contain itself, but

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gives vent to its thoughts in thanks and praises, and perceives a satisfaction from thence, not arising as in the practice of many other virtues, only from a consciousness of well-doing, or from the removal of an uneasiness, but attending upon the action itself, and flowing naturally from it. Such as transports for the present, and delights upon reflection.

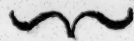
Having thus showed this duty of thanksgiving to be fit and reasonable, I proceed, *secondly*, to point out the proper object of it. And this the Psalmist mentions in the text, *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!* The other attributes of God may raise our wonder and astonishment. They exceed the utmost stretch of our imagination, and we have no other way of expressing them but such as shews that we do not fully comprehend them. It is goodness alone which is in its own nature amiable. Without it all the attributes of the Deity could only render him infinitely terrible, All-wise to deceive, Almighty to destroy. It is this which makes every other excellence lovely and useful. When we consider the frame of this universe about us, its vast extent, magnificence and beautiful proportion, we cannot sure, but be filled with admiration at the Wisdom which designed, and the Power which framed it; but if we carry our thoughts farther, and consider for what end all this was created, to communicate happiness to a vast variety of creatures; when  
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we reflect what peculiar advantages men are furnished with, how many and great helps they have towards obtaining their happiness, if they did not defeat all by their own perverseness; when they do thus endeavour to disappoint the Bounty of Providence, with what patience and long-suffering God bears with their iniquities, and how ready he is to forgive them upon their repentance, and how willing to assist them in it; when we consider all this, must not our hearts be warmed with the strongest sentiments of love and gratitude? Can we refrain from breaking out into praises and thanksgivings, and calling out, with the inspired Psalmist, upon all things, animate and inanimate, heaven and earth, men and angels, to join in glorifying a Being of such transcendent Goodness.

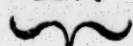
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There is *farther* urged, in the latter part of the text, a more particular motive to praise God the consideration of what wonderful things he hath done for us. Beside the general obligations which all men have to his bounty, the common blessings which he hath bestowed upon all; there are none of us who have not received peculiar favours from him, advantages or deliverances, which, however they may be commonly ascribed to accident or chance, or to the ordinary course of things, words, in themselves, of no real sense or meaning, reason and revelation both teach us alone, are to be attributed to Providence.

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It is a certain truth, and, when seriously considered, cannot admit of doubt or debate, that every thing we possess, every deliverance from danger we meet with, is derived from an Almighty Governor, the source and preserver of life; yet evident as this truth is, men, in their daily practice, deny it, living as if there were no God in the world. This appears in nothing more manifestly than in their backwardness and neglect to pay that just tribute of praise and thanksgiving to the great Creator of the universe, which his innumerable benefits, poured out continually upon us, indispensibly require; a duty, not only enjoined by positive precept of Scripture, but enforced by reason, to which we are bound by every thing that can influence a rational creature, by all the ties of interest and gratitude. I shall therefore, at present, suitably to my text and the solemnity of this day, consider at large this great and too much neglected duty, that we may be induced to *praise the Lord for his Goodness, and declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men.*

If we extend our views *farther*, and take into our account the dispensations of God to whole nations and communities, we shall have still greater cause to *declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men*; for, as the interests of many are concerned here, as the events are of great and general consequence, such deliverances excite our attention more strongly, and are attend-  
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ed with more extraordinary circumstances, than the mercies granted to private persons or families. In this respect, we of these nations, have as strong motives to gratitude and thanksgiving as ever any people had: Our deliverances, in number, importance, and the extraordinary manner in which they were brought about, yielding to none, except those wrought for the children of *Israel*, proceeding from the immediate interposition of the Divine Arm. It would be easy to prove this by many instances, our history every where abounding with them; I shall now confine myself, as I proposed in the *third* place, to consider the present occasion, and the deliverances which we commemorate this day.

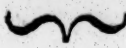
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How far a mistaken zeal may change and corrupt men's minds, so as to extinguish in them all sentiments of compassion and humanity, and induce them to commit the most outrageous acts of cruelty, with a persuasion that they advance thereby the cause of God and religion. We have seen, by many fatal examples, the whole conduct of the church of *Rome*, and the principles she hath always avowed of extirpating hereticks, are undeniable testimonies of this truth. And certainly there could not have entered into the heart of man a more horrible design than that which was to have been executed as upon this day. To destroy at once the King, the whole Royal Family, the nobility and principal gentry of the realm, which, if it had succeeded, must

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have involved these nations in unspeakable confusion and misery. And with such subtilty and secrecy was the plot laid, and brought so near to the time of execution, that the discovery of it bears the strongest marks of the Divine Interposition.

Nor is this all, this day brings to our remembrance a danger as great, and a deliverance as extraordinary, in latter times, from those of the same religion; when the pernicious spirit of Popery no longer lurked and laid plots in the dark, but appeared in triumph, armed with all the splendor and power of Royalty, an unhappy Prince, perverted in his youth and educated in that belief, misled by a blind and obstinate bigotry, attempts to introduce once more among us the yoke of that superstition under which our fathers had so long groaned; and administering all things by the hand of high and arbitrary power, prepared to overturn the whole constitution; and, without doubt, armed as he was with the whole executive power of the community, he might have succeeded too well, if it had not pleased God to preserve us by extraordinary means, by sending to our assistance a Prince, whose virtue and wisdom saved our liberties and religion, which were on the brink of ruin; a Prince who, being descended from ancestors, patriots and warriors, the deliverers of their country from superstition and slavery, did not degenerate from their virtues. But finding his native country over-run by a victorious power,



power, the tyrant of his own, the destroyer of every neighbouring people, when the bravest and most experienced shrunk from the danger, boldly stood forth, and, by unparalleled courage and conduct, checked the progress of those arms which had filled all *Europe* with terror; and this he did in early youth, performing heroic deeds at an age when others scarcely begin to conceive manly thoughts. In his riper years, Providence called him to a yet more shining scene of action, making him the instrument of rescuing those nations from slavery and superstition, and arming him with the accession of their strength, to carry on more effectually the same great design, to preserve liberty and pure religion, and curb the ambitious spirit of *France*, the most dangerous enemy of both; nay he provided, as far as human prudence could, for their security even after his death, by settling the succession to his crown on the illustrious house which how happily reigns over us, heirs of his virtue as well as sceptre; in whom Providence seems to promise a continuance of the blessings they have preserved to us, granting them a numerous progeny, the ornament of the throne, and the hope of these nations. Have we not then, all we of these realms, cause to rejoice in this day, to celebrate the memory of the hero whom God hath made the glorious instrument of so many blessings to us, and I trust to our posterity.

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This

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to mention some inferences which naturally follow from what has been said.

*First*; Whatever happens to us here we are to attribute to the divine appointment, and receive as derived from him. Those which we call by the name of second causes, we know, act only by a power granted by, and dependent upon, Him; and the course of nature means no more than the laws established by him, according to which he has ordered that things should be administered here. Our good fortune and successes, therefore, whatever they may be, we must not ascribe to our own merit and abilities, but should acknowledge them to be purely his gifts, and think ourselves thereby in a more peculiar manner obliged to employ them agreeably to his will. This reflection will teach us also to support whatever calamities may befall us with patience and resignation, since they must be sent either as punishments for our sins, as trials of our virtue, or as means of reclaiming us from our vices; and, considered in any of these lights, we shall find them reasonable and just, for the most part real mercies and favours; at least, by enduring them properly, we shall certainly turn them to our own advantage. The great mistake is, that our prosperity we generally look upon to be the fruit of our own good conduct, and due to some excellence in ourselves; whereas we are very ready to ascribe our misfortunes



fortunes to Providence; thus, in the one case, SERM.  
we become vain and insolent; in the other, dis- XV.  
contented, and murmur against God and reli-  
gion; a false and partial way of reasoning,  
which is the source of a great part of the mis-  
eries of mankind.

*Secondly*; We should consider what disposition of mind is necessary in order to offer up to God this duty of thanksgiving aright. It is easy for a man, upon any signal success, while his joy is yet fresh and lively, to break out into an ejaculation of praise and thanks to God, without any great degree of piety or true devotion. But as this is a transient and perishable fit of gratitude, most unworthy of the great Being, to whom it is addressed, so it is incapable of answering the purpose for which this duty was prescribed; that is, to impress upon our minds such a full and perfect notion of the Goodness of God to us, as should fill us with love towards him, and veneration for his laws; as should become an active and ruling principle within us, and preserve us from giving way to any temptation, which might render us just objects of his displeasure. We should therefore approach the divine throne with minds fully possessed with the knowledge of our own unworthiness, and of his Majesty, and Goodness, and Excellence: We should, as far as may be, purify our hearts from every evil habit, from every black and vain passion, and, while we acknowledge favours and mercies vouchsafed to us, endeavour to lay up in our minds

SERM. minds such a sense of them as may, in some  
XV. fort, render us deserving of more, and greater  
benefits.

*Thirdly*; There cannot be a stronger motive to general charity and goodwill to mankind, than a frequent and regular practice of this duty. An invocation of the same favours, a return of thanks for the same mercies, must continually remind us of the relation which we bear to each other, that we are members, as it were, of one great family, deriving our life, and the support of it, from the bounty of the same universal Parent, liable to the same infirmities, exposed to the same evils, and protected by the same all-seeing Providence. Shall not every mean, every selfish passion, vanish before these considerations? And shall not the gratitude due to the great Author of all things warm every heart with strong sentiments of tenderness and regard to all who bear his image? In like manner the contemplation of our dependent, uncertain condition, must wear out of our minds every thing cruel and oppressive, and fill them with humanity and compassion. This is the natural and necessary effect of true and frequent devotion; and how happy a change would the due practice of it make in the affairs of this life! The whole earth, now a scene of troubles and violence, would then be as one great altar, sending up sweet incense to its Almighty Creator; and men, instead of being mutual plagues, would



would concur in promoting universal happiness. SERM.  
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This is the light in which we should look upon this important duty ; and whenever we assemble to return praise and thanksgiving to God for the wonderful things which he hath done for us, we should endeavour to join with gratitude to him, love and affection towards mankind.

May a spirit of justice and candour, of patience and meekness, of goodwill and charity reign among us ! May we carefully cultivate in our minds the seeds of piety and virtue, of temperance and industry, of loyalty to our Sovereign and love to our fellow-citizens ! And may each of us, by behaving ourselves properly in our several stations, endeavour to promote our private and public happiness, and improve the blessing which God hath so bountifully bestowed upon us.

That we may all seriously reflect upon these things, God, of his infinite Mercy, grant, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord,

SERMON

# S E R M O N XVI.

Providence of God the sole Guide  
of human Affairs.

Preached in St. *Andrew's Church, Dublin*;  
*Dec. 18, 1745*; the Day appointed for  
a general Fast.

D A N I E L iv. 25.

*Till thou know that he ruleth in the kingdom of men,  
and giveth it to whomsoever he will.*

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THESE words are part of the edict published by *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babylon* to his subjects, declaring the cause of that extraordinary veneration which he paid to the God of the *Hebrews*, and the respect with which he treated the religion of a conquered people, before held in abhorrence and persecuted by him. This Prince had extended his conquests over a great part of the East, had adorned the seat of his Empire, and raised palaces with a pomp and magnificence unknown in former ages. In the midst of all this glory he tells them, that he was terrified by a vision, which  
his



his magicians, or learned men, could not explain. At length, having consulted the prophet *Daniel*, he learns the explanation of it, that God revealed, in this vision, the sentence which he was about to pass upon him; that *he*, the King of *Babylon*, *should be driven out from men; that his dwelling should be with the beasts of the field; that he should be wet with the dew of Heaven; that seven times, or years, should pass over him; that is, that he should fall into a deep melancholy distemper, and be deprived of his reason, for that period; and immediately follow the words of the text, till thou, Nebuchadnezzar, know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.* In what follows, the king goes on to declare, that at the appointed time when, by this severe punishment, he had been sufficiently humbled, and thoroughly convinced that all the success and riches in which he had gloried so immoderately, were derived from God alone, and depended entirely upon his will; he was then restored to the use of his reason, resumed his sceptre, and recovered his former majesty and splendor: And he concludes the whole declaration with acknowledging God to be Supreme in Heaven and Earth, that his power is not to be controuled, nor his dispensations reprehended by any.

I have been thus full in laying before you the occasion of the words in the text, because the history of that extraordinary person to whom they were spoken, is a very strong illustration of  
their

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XVI.

their sense, and a clear example of their truth : For what can be more proper to inspire us with lively notions of the Power and Justice of God, than the instance which we here behold, of a victorious monarch, who had every where divine honours paid to him, in the midst of all his vanity and triumphs, humbled at once, by a stroke from Heaven, below the meanest of mankind, and continuing in this deep affliction, till he is brought to a sense of his frail, dependent condition, and of the Majesty of the Almighty ?

The words themselves contain this proposition ; that God presides over all human affairs, and disposes of events, those particularly which relate to nations and kingdoms, according to his pleasure.

This truth I shall endeavour to lay more fully before you in the following discourse ; and I shall make such observations from it as seem useful and suitable to the present occasion.

There was a sect among the ancient philosophers, considerable by their learning and numbers, who affirmed, that God did not govern the world, nor concern himself with human affairs, but that he left all things to the guidance of blind, undirected chance. They supposed the greatest degree of happiness to consist in entire absence of pain ; and, as they imagined the government of the universe to be a work of trouble and labour, they concluded, that the Deity, being perfectly and necessarily happy, did



not interfere in it, nor willingly undertake a charge which must detract from his felicity.

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But this opinion manifestly proceeded from a wrong notion of the divine perfections; for, to believe, as they did, that a Being of infinite Power cannot, without toil and fatigue, govern a world which takes up but a point of that unlimited space which he fills, is contrary to demonstration. This is to ascribe the defects which arise from our imperfection and weakness, to the great Author of the universe: As all things lie open to his view, and yield to his power, it is evident, that he can neither meet with difficulty in regulating, nor suffer distraction in attending to a multitude of objects, but can guide and govern all by the sole influence of his will: Besides, is that a felicity worthy of the divine perfection, which consists in mere indolence and ease? And can we suppose a good Being to be happier in the enjoyment of repose and inactivity, than in the exercise of goodness, in the communicating happiness to others? Add to this, the absurdity of maintaining that all the regularity of causes and effects, all the beauty and uniformity, observable in the structure and motions of the bodies about us, should proceed from chance only, that is, from nothing; for chance is not a being or agent of any kind, but is merely a name without signification; and when we say a thing happens from chance, we mean no more than that we know not from

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whence

SERM. whence it happens: We only use a word to  
XVI. conceal our ignorance where we cannot assign  
a cause. But since it is as demonstrable that  
God is good and just, as that he existeth;  
since he is Almighty and every where present,  
it follows, undeniably, that he continues  
to regulate those springs which he first put  
into motion; and to sustain and preserve that  
frame which he created in the beginning; for,  
to make infinite Goodness, joined to infinite  
power, the unconcerned spectator of its own  
works, is a manifest contradiction.

From this reasoning, it appears likewise, what  
judgment we are to form of their opinion, who  
suppose all things to be governed by fate and  
nature; for, if by those terms they understand  
laws at first appointed by God, which continue  
to operate according to their original institution,  
they agree with the assertors of Providence, as  
those laws are the will of God proceeding from,  
and dependent on, him. If they mean any  
thing different from this, any principle distinct  
from, and independent of, Him, like the asser-  
tors of chance, they use names without real  
meaning; for mere fate, or nature, or necessity,  
are no beings or agents, but, when they mean  
any thing, they signify regular effects of settled  
and established causes.

Thus it is evident, that God is the natural  
Governor of the world, guiding and supporting  
all those forces by which it subsists: It follows,  
by the same method of reasoning, that he is the  
moral



moral Governor also ; that he presides over the affairs of mankind ; that he directs and orders them suitably to his will : And this he does, not only in mighty and signal events, in the revolution of states and empires, but he descends likewise to watch over the fate of every private person ; for whatever may appear to us intricate or confused herein, can have no difficulty to him, who sees all things and is every where present. This is that Providence with respect to which there is nothing great or small, nothing near or remote, nothing beautiful or loathsome, but to which all are alike perfectly known, are made and preserved by it, which sees, and governs, and supports, and pervades, and contains, all things ; *in whom we live, and move, and have our being.*

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This Providence, however, without which not a hair of our heads falls to the ground, appears to interpose in a more remarkable and extraordinary manner, in those events which relate to nations and kingdoms, than in those which affect private persons only ; for, comprehending the fates of many, the former are of much greater importance, and draw our attention and consideration more powerfully, than the latter. It has been likewise observed by learned men, that the divine justice seems to be more nearly concerned in their successes or calamities ; for we have cause to expect, that if the virtues of good men be not rewarded in this life, they shall meet with an abundant recompence hereafter ; nay, this very fact, the miseries of good men here,

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and the flourishing state of the wicked, affords the strongest argument which can be drawn from unassisted reason, for the belief of a future state; whereas nations, or communities of men, as such, exist here only, and therefore, as they are nations, are incapable of any rewards or punishments but such as are distributed in this life.

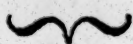
Inferences, I confess, have been drawn from this reasoning which do not follow. We indeed may consider a society as one political person, existing only in this life, yet it cannot be argued from thence, that the justice of God must necessarily reward or punish such society here, according to its merits or demerits, because every individual of which it is made up, will be recompensed according to his deserts hereafter; and the whole differs not from all its parts, except in our manner of conceiving it.

But thus much, I think, may be clearly inferred from the argument, that although this public dispensation of blessings and curses to great societies of men, be not strictly necessary, yet it is worthy of God, and very suitable to his manner of governing the world, that he may render manifest his Justice and Providence by brighter and more conspicuous examples, such as may draw the attention of mankind, and imprint notions of his Power and Majesty more deeply on our minds. Dispensations to private persons, when examined into, may perhaps bear as evident marks of the Divine interposition as any;



any; but, undoubtedly, national events are known more universally, every step is traced, every instrument in them observed, and the whole is much more interesting and affecting; and therefore, with regard to us at least, they seem to be more worthy of God's interfering after an extraordinary manner in them.

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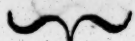


Accordingly, we find that wherever an universal depravity of manners prevails, where vice overflows the land, God always pours down calamities upon it, destruction in various shapes, fire and sword, pestilence and famine, and, in the end, gives them up into the hands of the enemy. On the contrary, those states where great and public virtues are eminently cherished, he crowns with prosperity and success. Of both those cases, not the holy Scriptures only, but also prophane history, furnish many undeniable instances. The best heathen writers observe the flourishing or declining state of empires to bear proportion to the prevalence of virtue or vice in those countries; and this order of things they constantly ascribe to the Justice of God.

It must be acknowledged, however, that this may, in a great measure, be accounted for in the ordinary procedure of things, without having recourse to the immediate interposition of God, from the natural tendency which virtue has to render a people happy, by introducing an observance of the laws, obedience to the magistrate, and concord and unanimity amongst all

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ranks of men ; as for the opposite reasons, vice must be pernicious. It is also true, that, even in those events which are esteemed the most extraordinary, which no human prudence could have foreseen, or have found any probable method of accomplishing, after they have happened, persons of penetration may discover the several steps by which they were brought to pass, and explain, from natural causes, the whole manner in which they were produced ; yet this is no proof that God does not govern the world, and order those very events ; for, as he is the Author of Nature, this tendency of virtue and vice, this power of second causes to produce their effects, flows only from his Divine appointment, and is as truly his action as the immediate interposition of his Almighty Arm. The great motions of the universe, the revolution of the heavenly bodies, the mysterious union of matter and spirit, our sense and faculty of reason, are as manifest effects, and as strong instances of Almighty Power as the sudden stopping of the Sun, or raising a dead body to life ; yet the one we attribute to the power of second causes ; in the other, we acknowledge the finger of God : And the cause of our making this distinction, where there is no real difference, is this : Whatever returns constantly and regularly, custom makes familiar to us, we stile it the course of nature, and look upon it without curiosity or emotion ; but when any thing very unusual happens, that deviates from, and interrupts, this order, our attention  
and



and admiration are raised, and we are forced to resolve it into the will of a supernatural agent.

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Now, from this argument, it follows, that since the practice of virtue undeniably promotes the happiness of mankind, of private persons, and especially of nations and communities, and since vice is pernicious, bringing many evils on the one sort, and seldom failing, in the end, to overturn the other; whether this happens by the constant direct influence of God interposing by blessings and judgments, to vindicate his Justice and the authority of his laws; or whether it happens from the natural efficacy of second causes, established by him in the beginning, and continuing, of themselves, to act according to his original appointment: Which soever of these be the case, the effects are equally from him, are to be attributed equally to his Providence, *who ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.*

But why hath not God rendered this point more clear? Why hath he not taken away all ground of doubting? Why doth he not signalize his Providence in a superior manner, and distinguish his operations from the working of second causes, by performing things plainly impossible to human force or skill?

In answer to this, observe, *first*, that this is not the method of God's dealing with mankind, he does not astonish and overpower them into a

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belief of his Being or Providence, but affords arguments enough to every rational enquirer for the demonstration of both; whereas, if he suffered them to shine forth with this irresistible lustre, so as to compel and extort assent, there would be no room left for enquiry; the evidence would be so very strong, that there could not be any merit in faith.

Besides, the truth is, that this method proposed would not answer the end contended for: Those proofs of power, continually exhibited, would become no proofs; miracles, frequently repeated, would be no miracles; for, being wonderful only because unusual, when they grow common they must cease to be wonderful. God, therefore, generally employs human means, and brings to pass the most extraordinary events by easy and ordinary methods.

And this is wise upon another account also; for, if second causes did not, for the most part, produce their effects, there would be little foundation left for industry among men who chuse and employ the proper means, because there is a probability of obtaining the end proposed by the use of those means: Yet, on the other hand, that we may have some proof of an immediate Providence, that we may not be over-confident, and ascribe our successes to our own abilities alone, it is wisely ordered, that these second causes should not always produce their usual effects, nor things happen according to our most reasonable expectations. *We see that the race is*

not



*not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill.* Unforeseen accidents intervene, which defeat the best laid schemes, and make the worst concerted successful.

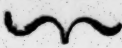
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It is true, indeed, that these seeming variations from the settled course of things. may be supposed to arise from laws established by God at first, which might have been so constituted by an omniscient Author, even with regard to the actions of free agents, as to extend to all cases; by which means they might have served as fully to vindicate his Providence, as his own immediate interposition can do: Yet certainly it is a notion less difficult and subtle, more suitable to God's Justice and Goodness, and confirmed by the authority of Holy Scripture, to believe that, in great and remarkable events at least, he interposes, directing and employing the natural powers of agents here, in such a manner, as to execute whatever seems fit to his infinite Wisdom, without however deviating from the established order of things into what is evidently miraculous.

Neither let any man say, that this opinion of the divine interposition is unphilosophical: For it is demonstrable, that the great bodies of the universe could not continue to perform those motions, without which the whole system must be dissolved, if some Power, superior to matter, to all its known laws and qualities, did not act  
upon

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upon them by perpetual influence; and the best and truest philosophy proves this frame of the world to be kept together by an immaterial agent, most probably, by the immediate operation of an Almighty Governor.

Whenever, therefore, we observe a long train of accidents, concurring, in an extraordinary manner, to produce a great and important event, especially, where such event appears conformable to the Divine Justice, it is not only a pious persuasion and agreeable to Holy Scripture, but likewise philosophical, to believe this event to be from God; to be the immediate action of an omnipresent Ruler, directing and conducting, in Wisdom and Goodness, all things to their proper ends.

Having thus established the superintendence of Providence, it may be useful to consider briefly the general methods of his dispensations to kingdoms and communities.

History informs us, that whilst industry and probity, disinterested virtue and a love of their country, prevailed among a people, they never failed to flourish, extending their conquests, or (what a wise nation would judge preferable) enjoying tranquility and plenty at home. Whenever corruption broke in upon them, if prosperity introduced luxury, that, by multiplying the wants of men, gave birth to avarice, if mean contracted views, a spirit of venality and low ambition took place, that state immediately



diately declined, it became despised abroad, SERM.  
divided and broken at home, and tended to fi- XVI.  
nal ruin, unless the evils following from the  
abuses mentioned, prevented its ruin, by caus-  
ing a reformation of those abuses.

As, therefore, God lays afflictions upon private persons, either in order to reclaim them, or as punishments for their sins; he deals in like manner with nations, sending calamities to amend them; and if they prove incorrigible, turning those chastisements into severe punishments, and at length destroying what cannot be adjusted.

It is true that, in the nature of things, those calamities have a direct tendency to reform a corrupted state; for adversity never fails to revive public spirit and fortitude, where any good principles remain: And so it is in the case of private persons; distresses have a natural fitness to make men pious and humble; yet this doth not exclude the Providence of God in either case, who makes use of second causes to execute his intentions, directing and controuling without seeming to interpose.

We need only look into the history of these realms, to find strong instances of the truth and importance of these observations.

At the time of the reformation, we were blessed with prosperity, under a long and glorious reign: Vice, the usual attendant of great national success, ensued, beneath the sway of a weak  
Prince,

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Prince, grasping at immoderate power, yet the slave of his favourites; unhappily the virtues of his son, which might have adorned private life, were not fit for a throne; the same wrong measures were pursued, under the influence of the same ministers; the contagion spread; and the consequence was a destructive civil war, ending in the total overthrow of our constitution: Anarchy succeeded, and, as it always happens, gave birth to tyranny. Delivered from this state of confusion, by means almost miraculous, the nation became again corrupt, through an abhorrence of hypocrisy and enthusiasm, instruments of the late dreadful evils passing violently into the opposite extreme of profaneness and immorality. Then were our sins visited by the greatest of evils, *Popish* superstition supported by arbitrary power; our laws, liberties and religion were brought to the edge of the precipice.

It pleased God, in that critical juncture, to raise up for us a deliverer in the person of a glorious Prince, who, amidst a trembling republic, had stood forth the single bulwark of liberty, against a powerful, ambitious conqueror. Called to the throne of these kingdoms, amidst royalty, he preserved the love of liberty; and, having past his life in support of it, was taken from hence, when he had just settled a plan, the foundation, in a succeeding reign, of a long train of successes,

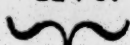


successes, which filled *Europe* with the glory of the *British* arms.

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After this, how our ingratitude to God, and national feuds and discontents, were punished with an open rebellion against our late most gracious King, is yet fresh in the memory of many amongst us; and the chief occasion of our meeting here this day, a like perfidious and desperate attempt against his most excellent Majesty, and our own peace, rights and properties, ought to impress these truths deeply on our minds; ought to open our eyes, and dispose us carefully to examine our ways; to consider how we may best avert this, and prevent the like perils hereafter.

The immediate means necessary to repel present danger are not within my purpose; but what, from these arguments, from this short sketch of our history, I would remind you of, and intreat you seriously to consider, is, that the foundation of all national happiness must be laid in virtue. We may boast of the best constitution in the world; but, without virtue, the best is vain: For human prudence cannot devise a form of government so perfect, can never distribute power and balance it so equally, that the poize shall not be broken, and the whole system fall to pieces if a general corruption of manners prevail. We may boast of most excellent laws; but laws never can secure right without virtue; power will violate them, fraud elude, interest pervert them; virtue alone can supply

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supply that principle, a right intention and goodness of heart, without a competent degree of which, residing somewhere, every society must be dissolved; for certainly wrong will not execute laws made to preserve right.

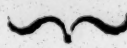
Observe *farther*; This virtue cannot subsist without religion: Allow it to be as amiable and excellent in itself, as its greatest admirers represent it to be, yet the bulk of mankind will not be brought to obey its precepts upon that motive only; for since, with the addition of the greatest reward which religion proposes to them, they are not, in fact, generally virtuous, they will certainly be less virtuous when they live and act without hope or expectation of any reward. Religion, therefore, is absolutely necessary to the happiness of a nation.

It is still more peculiarly so to one under our present circumstances. If God, in his wrath, should, at any time, permit such an impious attempt as the present rebellion to succeed, the two principal evils we are to dread from it, are the loss of property and the overthrow of our religion.

Now, the first of these cases is by no means a danger of the same concern to persons of all ranks. A poor mechanic, or indigent labourer, has little to fear on that score: He may flatter himself that his condition will be the same under any government. But Religion is an universal principle, equally influencing all men.

Every

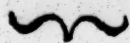


Every true *Protestant* amongst us must alike fear SERM.  
and oppose a superstition, which he esteems im- XVI.  
pious and idolatrous, destructive of reason and   
liberty, and highly displeasing to God. The  
poor man, who is sincere, must be equally averse  
with the rich, from subscribing to such a faith.  
Whatever, therefore, tends to abolish a sense of  
religion, tends also to disarm loyalty to our so-  
vereign of its firm support. I know that all  
men do not see or attend to this consequence,  
and some there are who extol the love of their  
country, duty to their king, and a zeal for li-  
berty, with the highest praises; who profess to  
have those excellent qualities, and may think  
that they really have them, while, at the same  
time, they despise religion and deride every  
thing sacred. But they may be assured that, in  
so doing, they give a mortal wound to the cause  
they defend, and loose the tie which binds loyal-  
ty, the love of freedom and our country, the  
most strongly upon the consciences of us all, and  
seems to be the only strong and certain tie up-  
on the minds of the greatest number.

That religion may be useful to these purposes,  
it is not enough that a form and show of it be  
kept up; its true spirit must animate us, must  
touch, and warm, and raise our hearts, and  
shine out in our actions: But if there should not  
be left even this shew, this form; if it should  
become a fashionable accomplishment to pro-  
fess infidelity, to condemn every thing serious  
and awful, to deny revelation and a future state,  
how

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how deplorable must the condition of that people be! How great must be the care and concern of every good man to check the progress of such dangerous, such destructive errors! *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

We have seen, from considerations merely political, that such practices and opinions are highly dangerous in all circumstances, chiefly in ours. How much more pernicious and fatal must they appear to be, if we add religious considerations; if we reflect that they bring down the wrath of the Almighty, who never fails to punish national iniquity with national calamity? We know that He can taint the air with plagues; that He can raise storms to disperse the most powerful forces; that He can fill the hearts of men with strange terrors and amazement; that He can divide those who seem most firmly united; and, by an extraordinary concurrence of unforeseen accidents, defeat the best laid scheme, even when it seems to be upon the point of succeeding. Before his throne, therefore, let us prostrate ourselves, confessing our manifold sins and iniquities; praying that those judgments, which we have justly deserved, may be averted from us; and humbly beseeching a continuance of those favours which, upon many and signal occasions, He hath graciously vouchsafed unto us.

But it is not sufficient that we pray to Almighty God, but we must likewise order our lives and conversations aright, so as to render ourselves fit objects of his mercy and favour, and to gain our prayers acceptance with him.

for



for it is impossible that a Being, who sees the heart, can be deceived by shows and words, or be pleased with the worship of those who live in an open violation of his laws. Such hypocrisy is more worthy to raise his indignation against them, and to provoke him to increase their punishment.

I know it is esteemed a common fault to tax the age we live in with extraordinary vice and licentiousness of manners; but surely, to one who rightly considers, there will appear, at this time, just cause of complaint. When was the holy name of God more openly profaned? When was his revealed will treated with more indignity and contempt, and its authority more commonly rejected? When were all sorts of fraud more generally and more successfully practised? When were the reins more freely given to luxury and vanity, and selfish views more confessedly triumphant over public and generous virtue?

But although it must be confessed, that there are too just grounds for these complaints, and the prospect, beheld on this side only, is a melancholy one, yet have we not cause to despair? We do not want chearful views, and a rational foundation whereupon to build hopes of success; there are many bright examples of true virtue, piety and charity among us; we have many advantages which our enemies are destitute of; we know that our cause is just, engaged, as we are, in defence of our laws, rights and constitution, against a rebellious and desperate multi-

T

tude

SERM. tude at home, and a faithless and arbitrary  
XVI. power abroad ; we enjoy the light of a pure and  
~~~~~ holy religion, equally removed from a blind superstition and enthusiasm ; we live under a constitution where power and liberty are most happily balanced ; we are governed by a Prince, who, at the same time that he has shewn a paternal affection to his subjects, an unwearied care to preserve them in the enjoyment of plenty and peace, has likewise given shining instances of his courage and readiness to expose his Royal Person to every danger, when their safety and his glory require it.

These are all advantages which concur in opening to us the fairest prospect of success. But still the event is in the hand of Providence, which we cannot fail of rendering propitious to us by virtue and piety.

It is therefore incumbent, greatly incumbent, on every one of us, to discharge our duties, in our several stations, with care and humility, and endeavour, each in his sphere, by example and instruction, by executing and obeying the laws, to introduce such a sense of religion, by such a general reformation of manners, as may call down upon us private and national blessings, and entitle us to humble ourselves before the throne of grace with some degree of assurance, that *Almighty God will have compassion upon our infirmities, and those things which, for our unworthiness, we dare not, and, for our blindness, we cannot, ask, he will vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

SERMON

S E R M O N X V I I .

Pernicious Effects of evil Company.

Preached in St. Bridget's, Dublin;
Sept. 8, 1754.

PROVERBS i. 15.

*My son, walk not thou in the way of sinners ; refrain
thy foot from their path.*

THE condition and circumstances in which we are placed here, are such, that society is necessary to the happiness, if not to the very being, of mankind. For all the skill and industry of single persons are insufficient to supply the wants to which they are unavoidably exposed.

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Besides this necessity, which compels us to seek assistance from society, there is a natural inclination which strongly prompts us to it; and this is so deeply rooted in our minds, that we are scarcely capable of receiving any great pleasure

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which

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SERM. which does not depend upon, or is not, in some
XVII. sort, referred to, others; nor is solitude ever
~~~~~ eligible, but as it may render us more fit to contribute to the advantage or pleasure of company.

Now, although the being a member of a great body or society, may answer the former of these ends; may supply us with things necessary to life; yet something farther is required to the latter, to give us the pleasure and comfort which may be had from society; that is, the more near and intimate relation of private friendship, without which every enjoyment must be very imperfect. Accordingly it has been observed, that persons raised to the highest dignities, even the most powerful princes, amid all the splendor and affluence with which they were surrounded, thought their happiness incomplete without this; and rather than live without the privilege of friendship, have descended, from that height of majesty in which they were placed, to some of their subjects, whom they have made partakers of their cares, and continued to live with them, in that freedom and equality, for the want of which, no height of rank or power could compensate.

*Solomon*, having observed this absolute necessity of friendship and society, and of what high importance it is to chuse friends and companions rightly, hath, in this book of Proverbs, given many rules concerning that choice; of which the text is one. *Walk not in the way of sinners;*



ners ; enter not into any friendship with wicked men. *Refrain thy foot from their path ;* avoid not only the course of life which they lead, but, if it be possible, contract not any intimacy with persons of that character. SERM.  
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In treating of these words, I propose to lay before you the truth and usefulness of the precept contained in them, by shewing the dangers of evil, and the advantages of good, company ; an observation which, although obvious and common, being constantly assented to, when proposed, is yet worthy of your serious consideration, on account of its great importance to our happiness through every part of life.

And besides, notwithstanding its acknowledged truth, and that it is in the mouth of almost every one, yet is there no rule of life more generally neglected ; nor does any thing more frequently occur, than instances of innocent and well-disposed persons, being perverted at first and in the end undone, by an unwise choice of company.

As the foundation of all, let me mention, *first*, the authority of Holy Scriptures, chusing a few out of the many passages to this purpose, with which the Sacred Writings abound. *Make no friendship, saith Solomon, with an angry man, lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise ; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.* To this purpose the Prophet expostulates very sharply with

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*Jehosaphat* concerning the alliance into which he had entered with *Abab*, a wicked and idolatrous king; *Shouldest thou love them that hate the Lord?*

There is something very strong and solemn in the adjuration used by *St. Paul* to the *Thessalonians*: *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly.*

The Psalmist is very full and frequent in declarations of his disposition and practice relating to this point: *I have not sat with vain persons. I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked. I will not know a wicked person. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred, and account them mine enemies.* And so, on the other side, he professes, that his delight was in the saints, and in the excellent of the earth. *Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me. I am a companion for all those that fear thee, and keep thy precepts.*

To this authority of Holy Scripture, I proceed to add the confirmation of reason, to show that we ought to be careful in the choice of companions, from this consideration, that the nature of a man's friends or company must be of great consequence to his well-being. And this appears from hence, because they always have an extraordinary influence, not only upon his own  
temper



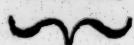
temper and behaviour, but upon all his chief SERM.  
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concernments.

The chief concernments, the things in which we generally place our welfare, and which all reasonable men propose to obtain or improve in the choice of their friends, are comfort in distress, interest and reputation; each of which can be obtained only by conversing with those that are good.

The first of these, comfort in distress, is one of the chief advantages that may be gained by friendship, and one of the principal ends proposed in it. It is an old observation, that friendship doubles the good things of life, and diminishes the evil, by communicating them. How great a consolation is it, when any thing lies heavy on the mind, to have a faithful bosom upon which we may safely lay the burthen of our secret griefs! One whose discourse may assuage our troubles, whose prudence may direct our conduct, whose cheerfulness may dispel our melancholy, whose very countenance and voice inspire delight. *As ointment and perfumes rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend.*

But how can this be hoped for from any wicked person? However agreeable his temper may be to a mind at ease, however soothing his discourse to the ear of the prosperous, yet can it bring little comfort to a troubled Spirit. For we cannot have confidence in a person whose sincerity is doubted; and without confidence, all attempts to comfort can avail but little.

SERM. That light mirth which was music to a mind at  
XVII. ease, is now jarring and dissonance.



Besides, the only sure support in adversity is religion, the firm belief of a wise and good Providence, directing all things to the best ends. And how is it possible for a man to administer comfort, from this consideration, who lives in rebellion against that great Being? Or how can one, who hath any love to religion, delight in the company of him who disclaims and despises it? It will rather be occasion of trouble and sorrow to him; as *David* elegantly describes it in his own case: *I beheld the transgressors and was grieved; rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy laws; the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.*

Whereas, on the contrary, with the good man are the words of consolation. The assurance we have of his sincerity and virtue disposeth us to listen, and gives weight to all he says. Wisdom, thus sweetened by affection, hath a strange power to dissipate sadness, and make hope spring up in the breasts of the most desponding.

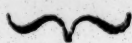
As to interest, this is the meanest motive which friendship can be contracted upon, if it be the only or principal one; but, in a lower degree, it is right and reasonable. This, likewise, is not promoted by intimacy with wicked men; for, being guided by their passions, and sacrificing the most sacred obligations to their vices, they are inconstant and insincere, and likely



likely to betray our interests, who neglect and  
forfeit their own. At best, the advantage from  
such friends is accidental, but most certain and  
most grievous, the disadvantage with respect to  
our innocence; for it is scarcely possible for one  
who converses familiarly with evil men, to escape  
the contagion of their vices: *Can a man take fire  
into his bosom and his clothes not be burnt?* If we  
should not be deeply infected, yet we must suf-  
fer some stain, some lighter pollution; and how  
far this may spread cannot be foreseen.

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Whereas, in conversing with the good man,  
there are many advantages: His known sincer-  
ity secures us from the anxiety of suspicion, the  
principles upon which he acts, remove all fears  
of change in him. His prudence will direct  
our behaviour, his authority correct our mis-  
takes, his affection moderate our sorrow, his  
example encourage and lead us into the paths  
of virtue, his very presence diffuse pleasure  
and cheerfulness over our minds, his piety and  
prayers recommend us to the favour of Almighty  
God.

As to reputation, the third article mentioned,  
it is clear, that this cannot be obtained by liv-  
ing in familiarity with wicked men. However  
rash and partial the publick may be in forming  
judgments, yet vice will ever be dishonour-  
able. Power may defend, riches may protect,  
or some shining qualities may shelter it a while  
from open infamy, but the wicked man scarce  
ever fails of being, in the end, rewarded with  
shame

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shame and reproach: Whence they who are friends to the vicious, share in the ignominy of their vices. Friendship either finds, or makes men alike; and the world justly supposes that we resemble those with whom we live in strict intimacy. For this reason, nothing can be of greater use to our characters, than a close union with wise and good men. The lustre of their good qualities will shed light on all around them; and the honour paid to them extends itself, in some degree, to all their friends. The choice of such intimates will be thought to have proceeded from a love of virtue in us; and it will be imagined that they are of worth who enjoy the esteem of the worthy. To form a perfect judgment of a man, and to discover his real character, requires time and attention; for which reason men generally judge from easy and obvious marks; and the company he keeps, being of this kind, very frequently from thence, as that is good or bad, they pronounce for or against him. And it is certainly a great part of prudence to chuse in such manner as to have this prejudice in our favour.

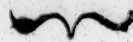
From what hath been said may be drawn some observations worthy of attention and care.

*First*; We should fix in our minds a right sense of the great use which may arise to us all from society and mutual converse. Thoughts, while confined to our own breasts, lie confused, and,



and, as it were, crowded in heaps ; it is by communicating them to each other in discourse, that they are opened out, and unfolded, and made to appear in their proper colours and dimensions. Hence we learn to reduce them into method, and, by ranging them fitly, arrive to just and regular knowledge.

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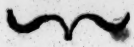


In society, imitation likewise assists our improvement, by teaching us to transplant into our own minds and manners, whatever is valuable or becoming in others.

Here also emulation joins its force, a strong and active principle, preserving us from that sloth and indolence too apt, insensibly, to creep upon us, and enlivening and invigorating all our faculties, by a generous desire to excel.

Upon these accounts, it has been usual for men, of all ranks and conditions, to join together, in some common design, for the improvement of this quality of sociableness to general advantage. This is the chief ground of those common associations among them, of corporations for cities, companies for trade, universities for knowledge ; and it is not easy to express what great advantage might be obtained, if men would study to make a right use of mutual converse.

There have been many instances of persons uneducated, and wholly illiterate, who, being unexpectedly advanced to high employments, which laid them under a necessity of debating much with each other, and of conversing with

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a great variety of persons, have arrived to extraordinary improvement, have become quick in business, ready and eloquent in discourse: Whereas men of solitary, contemplative lives, though furnished with much speculative good-sense and learning, are often found wholly unfit for affairs of life.

The truth is, since we are to live among men, a knowledge of mankind, of their characters and dispositions, is necessary; and that can be had only by experience, by free and frequent conversation. By these means, the wits of men are sharpened, their errors exposed, their vanity mortified, their passions restrained, caution and a command of themselves are acquired, sagacity in reasoning, and readiness in replying, are attained, and they are exercised in an easy and prompt eloquence, a talent manifestly of great use in all kinds of employment. Add to these, the signal advantage in having such friends as will freely tell us of our faults, from which none are exempt, whether committed through heat of temper, inadvertency, or wrong judgment. There cannot be any thing more useful than well-weighed Reproof, which will be ever well taken by the ingenuous and prudent, when administered by the hand of zealous and affectionate friendship.

*Secondly*; All amongst us, who may be considered in the different relations of parents or  
masters,



masters, ought to be careful, not only for our-  
selves, but those who are committed to our  
charge, or dependent upon us, in the choice of  
companions.

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The conduct of all persons is, in a great measure, formed by the principles and behaviour of those with whom they intimately converse. If good and evil be mixed in the same society, they will soon grow into a likeness of sentiment and manners, and thus become strictly united, or else they will be quickly separated. Now, in this case, the disadvantage is on the side of virtue; for the power of passion over that of reason, in the greater number, is such, that it is much more probable, the good shall be seduced by the evil, than the evil reformed by the example of good. This holds true in every period of life, but is remarkably so in youth, which is flexible, lively and credulous. And the great cause why good education fails so often of producing the good effects expected from it, is, that young persons mistake so frequently in the choice of their company, and, before they or their friends are aware, fall into ill habits, which afterwards are with great difficulty, if at all, corrected. Hence it is most necessary to forewarn and direct them carefully in this point; and it were well if such evil persons could be distinguished and pointed out to them, as rocks and quicksands are to mariners, who, if they approach too near, run the hazard of being

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ing wrecked. One cannot associate with these and escape unhurt. There is scarce a wicked person we converse with, who does not either recommend some vice to our imitation, insinuate it into our favour, or infect us with it unawares.

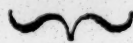
It is true, indeed, we may make good use of the worst company, and take occasion, from their manners, to observe and hate the deformity of vice; but yet there is ever this danger in the frequent converse of such, that one may grow too familiar with guilt, and the abhorrence of it become lessened by custom. By degrees a man endures that corruption which shocked him at first, and, in the end, he is brought to join in it.

As we should avoid wicked men, and endeavour to guard others against them, it is still more immediately our duty to watch over our own conduct and conversation, that we may neither corrupt by example, nor in discourse convey impure, immoral, or irreligious sentiments. One sometimes sees those, who are most earnest in warning against evil company, shew, in their own lives, the worst example; a most inconsistent and destructive behaviour; while they point out to you a distant danger with one hand, they tumble you down a precipice with the other. They who are at the head of families, do not enough consider the effects of their own bad conversation. You pity, deservedly,



edly, a tender parent who has disobedient children, but you must acknowledge the justice of Heaven, when you observe that parent to suffer by his own vices reflected in those children.

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*Thirdly*; We should labour to acquire those good qualities which are most proper to fit us for receiving and giving improvement by company.

Such, in the first place, is a readiness to instruct, to impart freely whatever knowledge we have obtained by observation or study. For some there are, who have a vicious reservedness and difficulty in teaching, confining what they have learned or discovered within their own breasts, as if knowledge could be lost or lessened by being communicated: Such men live to themselves, as if they were not members of a body.

Such also are candour and ingenuity of mind, by which we are brought readily to acknowledge our own mistakes, and to do justice to the perfections or pre-eminences of another. Obstinacy in opinion, unfairness in argument, envy and ill-nature, greatly obstruct the progress of truth; and, while they hinder the improvement, disturb the peace of company.

Such likewise is humility, a virtue which makes us inclined to listen and learn. Conceited men are so filled with an high opinion of themselves, that they will not attend to others.

They

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They become overbearing and insolent, too proud to receive instruction, too offensive to be admitted to instruct.

We may place discretion in the same rank, from the want of which arise many grievous abuses in conversation. Hence unjust and cruel censures of the absent, tedious, trifling discourse, when persons, unable to speak well, or to refrain from speaking, either talk scandalously or idly. But it is a valuable art to know how to be properly silent; through ignorance of which men every day betray their evil hearts or empty heads.

Say your circumstances are such that you are under a necessity of mixing in company with evil men; how are you to act? Be continually on your guard. Your virtue, surrounded with enemies without, hath also many within; love of praise, fear of contempt, sometimes a softness of nature, conspire to mislead you. Watch therefore, stop within the boundary of innocence. The rule is, in things indifferent, shew an easy, free complaisance; in moral points, a firm, unyielding constancy; neither be thou fearful of offending; to offend is a much less evil than to sin. But the truth is, the men who would corrupt, inwardly approve virtue, admire it in spite of themselves.

It is to be lamented that conversation should take the idle turn we find it hath, fashion confining it almost wholly to trifles; whereas religion



gion and useful knowledge might receive much advantage from it, if admitted in their turn; neither doth it seem that such discourse would be less pleasing, for being more useful. We often see men of wit and good understanding mispend their time. A rich soil shooting forth abundance of weeds, would surely be far more valuable if covered with corn or wholesome herbage.

The sum is this; since society is necessary, and the love of company natural to us, since it is of such high importance to our well-being that we chuse that company aright, we should be very cautious in making this choice, and consider well the characters of men, before we contract intimacies, *refraining our feet*, as much as possible, *from the path of sinners*.

We should likewise study to bring advantage to company, as well as receive from it; to which end we should establish a persuasion of our truth, honesty and good-nature; civility of manners, good-breeding and politeness, are but outward forms of expressing these where they are, and putting on an appearance of them where they are not; which very forms we should indeed by no means, neglect, for the comfort and ease of society very much depend upon them; they set virtue in the most amiable light, and make the want of it more tolerable. But the principal point is,

U

Let

290 *Pernicious Effects of evil Company.*

SERM. XVII. Let us, *first*, seriously endeavour to become wise and virtuous, sincere and candid: *Next*,  
~~~~~ Let us chuse, as far as possible, for companions, those who are such, or whom we may justly hope to render such, *refraining our feet from the path of sinners.*

Which, that we may all do, God, of his Infinite Mercy, grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Care of the Poor recommended,
especially of Lying-in Women.

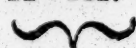
Intended to have been preached in the
Chapel of that charitable Foundation in
Dublin.

ISAIAH xlix. 22.

*They shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy
Daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.*

THESE Words are part of a magnificent description which the Prophet gives of the future conversion of the *Gentiles*, and of their final union with the Church of Christ; and they paint the new profelytes to this religion as being called out of a state of slavery and ignorance into liberty and light, crouding to embrace this heavenly doctrine, and marching in a kind of triumphal procession.

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The expressions thus applied by the Prophet in a figurative sense, to celebrate this great

SERM. event, permit me to employ in their literal fig-
 XVIII. nification, to recommend a principal duty, the
 ~~~~~ distinguishing characteristic of this holy religion,  
 Charity; an excellent branch whereof ye meet  
 this day to consider, and are entreated to encourage.

Ye easily see that the words, in their plain, direct sense, present to your eyes a lively image of the effect which your liberality here tends to produce; disconsolate women going out from hence joyful mothers, *bearing sons in their arms, and carrying daughters upon their shoulders.*

And what can be more pleasing than such effect? What better than such bounty? What more humane, may I not add almost even divine? Wherein can man resemble more nearly All-gracious Providence, who gives and preserves life; *in whom we live, and move, and have our being.*

So much appears from a general view of our subject; if we descend to particulars, our judgment of it will be more exact. Let us therefore consider it as respecting us in the three grand relations we bear, to our Creator, to our country, to human nature; that is, as we are Christians, citizens and men: Thus we shall see its true value distinctly, and may, with regard to it, clearly determine our own conduct.

That, as Christians, we should relieve the poor, assist the destitute, comfort the afflicted, none who read the Gospel can doubt, abounding, as it doth, with precepts to this purpose in  
 every



every page; *Give unto the Poor not grudgingly, for God loveth a chearful giver. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Deal thy Bread to the hungry, and bring the Poor, that is cast out, into thy house. He that soweth plentifully shall reap plentifully.* And that the distresses ye are now invited to relieve, are of the kind entitled to those blessings, cannot be disputed, bearing as strong marks of necessity and danger, and needing, as much as any other, the assistance of a kind benefactor.

Wherein can we follow more closely the example of our Blessed Lord, who *went about doing good*, giving ease to the tormented, health to the sick, strength and agility to the lame and languishing, breaking even the fetters of death, restoring to the faithful centurion his daughter, who had been dead, and to the weeping widow of *Nain* her only son, now carried forth before her on his bier? Will not this relief more peculiarly entitle the givers to that most gracious sentence which He, our Judge, shall pronounce in the last day, *inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me?* This bounty is therefore most worthy of *Christians*.

It was said, that we should contribute to it as Citizens also, it being of much public utility.

The end for which societies were formed, was to remove many evils incident to, and procure goods not attainable in, a solitary state. This

SERM. end, it is true, never can be fully obtained, be-  
 XVIII. cause of the imperfection of man's nature and  
 state here; there will be want, affliction, pain,  
 anguish, disorders will remain that cannot be  
 remedied, and abuses arise.

Now, what can the wisdom of society do to remove or lessen these? By the prudence of well-executed laws, it may prevent many evils springing from vice; evils of other kinds, from accidents; weakness, and what we call chance, it may soften by humane assistance, particularly by that of hospitals and charitable foundations, where the bounty of many united may, without hurting the benefactor, support the distressed, especially being under public inspection, and due regulation, where the objects, administration and effects are known.

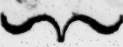
Among many of this kind, all excellent, the one, now immediately in our view, is one of the foremost in this respect, in *Usefulness to Society*; for the chief foundation of the prosperity of a state, is the multitude of inhabitants; it grows usually in wealth and power as it becomes populous: For this reason, the wisest states have always applied themselves, with much attention, to procure and increase the number of their people; to which end they encourage marriage, by assigning privileges and rewards to those who had a certain number of children; by rendering property secure, by making easy the means of subsisting families, by cultivating the arts of peace, by discouraging vice, and preventing



venting such evil fashions and habits as impair health and being.

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Now the tendency of the charitable foundation, this day before us, to produce this national effect, is manifest. I need not say how large a proportion of the unhappy mothers, or wretched infants, preserved here, must have otherwise perished: It is certainly not inconsiderable. If, then, you suppose this scheme executed to its whole extent (a hope from the good spirit prevailing among us, likely to be soon fulfilled) you see that it will add no small number of souls to the community; and, if it had existed many years past, we should not feel, in so great a degree, the present evils arising from a scarcity of inhabitants; for it is to be remarked, that the increase of inhabitants most to be desired, is among the lowest ranks, those of condition, or such as affect to live like those of condition, above labour, being perhaps numerous enough. Now, the direct influence of this charity is this increase; to supply hands for tillage, the most fertile parts of our island lying yet uncultivated, for the carrying on manufactures, for doing the laborious part and drudgery of mechanics, for the extending of commerce, for maintaining the safety and glory of the nation in the warlike forces of both elements, sometimes, as at present, filled up not without difficulty. This is the strength of a country, the foundations of which, though laid low on the earth, though

SERM. XVIII.  rugged and obscure in themselves, are yet capable of supporting a sublime superstructure of stability, splendor and magnificence.

We have cause, therefore, to say that, in supporting this, we contribute to the national advantage, we act the part of good citizens, and deserve the amiable character of lovers of our country.

It is true that, to make the blessing compleat, we should take in the kind as well as number, we should have many and good inhabitants; for multitude without virtue is a grievance: And if a scheme of this kind could be contrived, so as to provide for the work, as well as the being of children, it would be as perfect as possible. Now even this hath been attended to\*; the person who superintends this scheme of charity, proposing to annex to it that other, and to take care in bringing up such children as their parents, through poverty, cannot take care of; a design very reasonable surely, and in proportion to the extent it can embrace, as productive of public benefit as can well be devised. And who can say what farther wise institution may spring even from an humble beginning.

Our contributions here, thus worthy of us as Christians and citizens, are not less so as we are men.

One of the most distinguished affections in our frame is Compassion, which closely uniteth

\* See this more fully explained at page 302, in a note at the bottom.



all individuals in our nature, by a tie secret and SERM.  
not to be explained, yet of mighty strength and XVIII.  
influence. It is likewise peculiar; for we discern not, in the lower creation, any, or, at most, but feeble, traces of it. It is to be found in all, although its force varies; possibly in the original frame of the soul, undoubtedly from the difference of bodily constitution; but its greatest diversities arise from the prevalence of passions and strong habit. A fixed, rooted selfishness is its worst enemy, weakening and blunting this sense, in the end extinguishing it. Where this is the case, we cannot but highly disapprove, nay we look on the unrelenting and pitiless with a kind of horror, when the sight of exquisite misery strikes our eyes, or its cry sounds in our ears, we are melted at once, and hurried away before reflection, with zeal to relieve. He who can listen to the complaints, count over the groans, behold the tears streaming down the cheeks of the wretched, unconcerned, unmoved, what is he? What do we account him? A savage, a monster, not a man. And after we have removed or soothed misery, when we reflect upon it, what pleasure do we feel? Human nature knoweth not such pure, exquisite, heart-felt delight. But if the selfish principle hath prevailed, we are conscious, uneasy and filled with remorse. A proof not to be resisted, written in our heart, in-born, that it is our duty to shew compassion and mercy.

Now

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Now, what shall we say of the distresses which, on this occasion, sue for your assistance? Are any more grievous, more pressing, the relief of which hath better effects? I shall not attempt, I cannot paint to you the miseries which surround the persons in the situation of these suppliants, destitute of friends, of necessaries, of raiment, of even tolerable abodes; consider them in the most delicate of all circumstances, exposed to struggle with want, hunger, sickness, the rigour of the weather: And here behold them, on the other hand, supplied with all things convenient, lodged, cloathed, fed, attended, with all proper helps, of care, skill, remedies; how great, how surprising a difference! How worthy, how truly humane is this bounty!

Who is not pleased with, feels not a kind of fondness for, the Princess of *Egypt*, when *looking into the ark, she saw the babe, and behold it wept, and she had compassion on him; she took him up, and he became her son.* And do not all of us, who join in this benefaction, in some measure, partake of her virtue?

The *children*, saith the Prophet, *are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth;* but your charity will strengthen.

How truly might many an innocent say, with the babe in the Prophet: *Alas! my mother might have been my grave!* But your kindness maintaineth the rights of nature, and maketh the mother a source of life and health.

And



And all this good is produced at an expence, how very small! A trifle, such as many of us throw away every day, saves one, perhaps two, lives; for it is observable, that the oeconomy here pursued, keeps down the expences to a third part of what is required in a neighbouring land to work the same effects which I mention, not as finding fault in others, but giving to our own due praise. And it is a just recommendation of a charity, that the greatest good is done at the lowest cost. But may not this institution, after all, be an encouragement to idleness? Women, bred to work, finding here unbought, unearned provision, will cease from work.

Surely they must be very bad, and would be idle at any rate, whom the prospect of an aid, so limited and transitory, can make idle. Say, rather, the industrious will be induced, by this comfortable help in the greatest exigencies, to redouble their industry, will work more cheerfully, and return to labour with better health.

Well, but is not this institution an encouragement to vice and licentious manners? Is vice indeed so provident? Doth it foresee with such deliberation, and is it deterred by future difficulties and dangers? Surely not: It braves the greatest every day; at least, the good wrought here is certain, the evil, if any, doubtful.

Besides, all due care is taken to prevent such supposed abuse, previous to admission, their  
state,

SERM. state, character and circumstances are enquired into, and proper testimonials demanded.

XVIII. Or if, after all deserving objects that offer have been taken care of, an unworthy one should, by stealth, slide in, would not piety, would not humanity forgive? At worst, one sinless soul is preserved, the inoffending infant.

“ Well, but granting all this : Why such grandeur ? To relieve these poor objects is it right : Why in a palace ? ”

You will agree that such a building should be large for convenience, strong for duration, neat and warm for health. Now, allow fully for these conditions, ornament occasions a much less additional expence than is imagined. Neither is it useless ; it gives pleasure to a beneficent mind to behold the seat of the bounty clean, fair, even, elegant ; it draws attention, thence enquiry, in a scheme so reasonable, excites benefactions : Virtue should be beautiful as well as beneficial.

There is a farther and very signal use of this charity, which yet I shall but venture to hint at ; namely, the instruction and experience it bestows, which will diffuse themselves, by degrees, into distant parts of the kingdom. And through the want of these, how many lives are now shortened ?

Thus the utility of this charitable institution has, I think, been clearly proved ; the fact renders it undoubted. There are in the hands of all, lists of the numbers relieved hereby, and preserved, which it is needless to repeat. A  
comparison





comparison of these, in the several years, would afford some notion of the progress and gradual improvement of this scheme, a speculation not useless nor unentertaining. But I shall not attempt to lay before you such a particular history; indulge me in a few words on the subject.

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A private person having, in the course of his own experience, observed the manifold and bitter distress to which women in the lower ranks were exposed, touched with compassion, conceives in his mind a plan for their relief; sets about, executes it, at first, of necessity, in little; the good done draws notice, notice draws encouragement. By this unwearied activity, management, honest address, through many obstacles, combated by no small prejudices, and some misrepresentations, it subsists, it grows, it thrives; at length is transplanted, from its first infant abode, to this fair and ample mansion. No tax is raised but on willing minds; it is founded on piety and charity: If pleasure be made to contribute, it is that of an innocent and polite recreation. At length mistakes and misapprehensions vanish before the light of truth; it receives the seal of royal approbation; *Kings become its nursing fathers, and Queens nursing mothers*; the legislature assist in fixing and finishing it; a wider scene is opened, and better prospects unfold themselves: Time and industry, it is hoped, will render it still more useful and extensive; farther improvements may be  
thought

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thought of; \*the planter's hand now points out one, and prepares to make this plant more fruitful, by lengthening out its care from birth in part, to education; thus rendering useful the lives it saveth.

However this may prove, without doubt, what hath been done is well done; the design is excellent; the oeconomy observed here cannot be questioned; there must be frugality and care where great good is done at small cost. And I speak from knowledge, when I say, that the regularity of the accounts and register leaves nothing to be wished for, being accurate in method, complete for use, satisfactory even to the nicest curiosity; so that extravagance or misapplication need not be feared.

\* This hints at a design which the late Dr. *Moffe* not only had conceived, but, in fact, partly executed. It was this: A scheme was formed to raise a fund sufficient to defray the expences of nursing, cloathing, and general maintenance of all those children who should be born in the Lying-in Hospital, and whom their parents should consent to entrust to the doctor's care. A school was to be opened, provided with able Protestant masters, in the most useful trades and manufactures. The children, at a proper age, were to be received into this school; there to be instructed in the principles of the Christian Religion, in honesty and industry; and to be taught some such trade as their genius most strongly inclined them to. And it is fact, that, with a view of this kind, he, at his own private expence, had put out some children to be nursed, who, since his death, have been returned.—The scheme, in short, extended even to the providing a comfortable subsistence for the parents.

From



From hence the inference is obvious. If this institution of charity, under the disadvantages of its first setting out, produced such valuable effects as recommended it to the protection of pious and wise men, what may we expect from it now established by Royal authority, supported by the approbation and assisted by the bounty of the great council of the nation, with prudent governors to order and inspect: Thus placed, not as a *candle under a bushel*, but as a *city that is set on a hill*, the object of public attention.

Solomon describes Wisdom as *standing at the gates, at the entry of the city, crying out, and exhorting men to listen to her precepts and obtain true knowledge*. May not we, in like manner, truly represent charity as standing in the streets of this great city, inviting the poor, the sick, the maimed, the lunatic, to enter into her hospitable mansions, where she hath provided for them warmth, care, nourishment, medicine.

And behold, here, this day, she crieth out, in the words of one far wiser than Solomon, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*.

“ Unhappy women! whom poverty and danger surround in the most difficult of all conjunctures, *Come unto me, I will support you in the hour of approaching peril; skill, remedies, attendance, behold I offer you all; I will pre-serve you, and with you your innocent bur-*  
“ then,

SERM. "then, too likely, otherwise, to perish on the  
XVIII. "threshold of life.

~ Could these women, this day, supplicants to your bounty, lay properly their condition before you, how deeply, how justly would ye be affected! They would tell you, "We are encompassed with danger, poor, helpless, friendless, "in the most delicate of all circumstances; unclothed, unhoused, sunk beneath earth's "level, amid unwholesome damps, or exposed, "aloft, uncovered, to winds and rain; what "hazards must we run? We! alas! what hazards must They, which nature hath rendered "most dear to us, our wretched infants, run? "Shall we then become mothers but to lament "the loss of our children? Alas! dearest babes! "Do we bring you into life only that ye should "feel the pain of losing it? O! ye, whom God "hath blessed with plenty, assist, preserve; so "may ye be happy parents: *May your children "be like olive branches round about your table, and "your daughters like the polished corners of the "temple."*

Who could resist such entreaties? What pleasure must the contemplating the good effects of your own bounty here bestow? Those who come into this place, destitute, languid, sinking beneath (to them the unfortunate) bounty of nature; behold these departing from hence full of health and triumph, now joyful mothers; or, in the image of the text, *they shall bring sons in their*



*their arms, and daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.*

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Wherefore, my brethren, let us, according to our power, encourage so pious a work : Ye know that your assistance is much needed ; that it will be prudently employed, and produce great good ; ye will banish misery from among the works of God, will soften distress, will preserve innocence, will add hands to the community, and souls to the church of Christ. Think seriously of these things, and act according to the sentiments of your own hearts and light of your consciences. And may the God of comforts embrace us all, young and old, parents and children, rich and poor, in the arms of his Mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

X

SERMON

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## S E R M O N XVIII.

A religious Life the Source of  
true Pleasure.

Preached in the Chapel of Trinity-College,  
*Dublin; June 14, 1756.*

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P S A L M i. 2.

*His delight is in the law of the Lord.*

SERM.  
XIX.  
~

THE Holy Scriptures lay our duty before us in a great variety of lights, that it may have a stronger influence, and be more fitted to make impression on different tempers and understandings. Thus, sometimes, they deliver to us express positive commandments, enforced by promises and threatenings; again, they deter us from the opposite vices, by displaying their horror and deformity; and, at other times, they paint, in the liveliest colours, the amiable qualities and happy state of the good man, that we may be incited to imitate what is thus lovely and admirable.

This



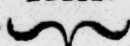
This latter is the method used in the Psalm now before us; the first part of which contains a description of the employment, character and blessed condition of the good man, to the end that we, following his example, may obtain his happiness. I shall, at present, confine myself to the words of my text, and the part of his character which they distinctly mark out; that he makes the study of God's revealed will his chief business and principal delight: And, suitably to the design of the Psalmist, I shall thence take an opportunity of recommending his example to all present, and exhorting them to the same practice, as most reasonable, fit and useful.

There is nothing more universally praised among men than virtue; and they have been ever esteemed the wisest men, who preferred it before every other possession, and the knowledge of it before every other study.

But it is not sufficient to praise virtue, to deliver precepts, and point out the way to it. There are farther required the strongest incitements, by which men, not only indolent, but naturally disinclined to goodness, should be roused and urged on to enter into the right path, and persevere in it.

Now, in this point, the writings of the wisest *Gentiles* are weak and languid. The Holy Scriptures alone propose to us many and powerful motives to virtue, a virtue which they raise upon the solid foundation of religion and piety,

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indeed the only true virtue ; and therefore, upon this account, the study of them deserves our greatest care, and is preferable to all other knowledge. For whether the mind of man be moved by the justice and reasonableness of a thing, or by its usefulness, or by the pleasure which it brings, all parts of Scripture concur herein, to convince and persuade men, that there is nothing which God can demand from man more justly, nothing which can bring more advantages, or be in itself more delightful, than this practice of virtue, which consists in the pure worship of God, the sanctity of life connected with this worship, and the fulfilling every moral duty. Thus, then, the Scriptures afford the strongest motives to the practice of virtue, as they represent it to be *reasonable, pleasant and useful*; each of which particulars deserves to be considered distinctly : After which I shall add a few words to shew how imperfect the best heathen writers were in this article ; the proposing fit motives to virtue ; and, *lastly*, conclude with a short application.

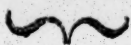
*First* ; How reasonably God demands of men the observance of these duties, appears, in general, from all the passages of Scripture which describe to us the great perfection and excellence of God, as it is in itself, and as it is manifested in the universe, in all and each of its parts, which he created in the beginning, which he preserves continually, and governs in wisdom  
and



and goodness. It appears, more particularly, SERM  
XIX.  
from those passages, in which the Scripture declares with what care and tenderness Providence watches over mankind, his church especially, in directing it, reconciling it to himself, and preserving it from error and delusion. In mentioning and frequently inculcating which things, these writings are most express and copious. The end plainly proposed herein is, that men, filled with admiration of God, should love and honour him most, in whom they find all things most excellent and amiable, from whom they have received whatever goods they possess, and continually do receive. For who, that considers how good and great God is here represented to us, can forbear from crying out, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honour, and glory, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.*

In truth, if the infinite perfections of God, and his many astonishing works which the Scriptures place continually before our eyes, had no relation to us, yet it would be most reasonable to honour a Being so transcendant in Glory and Excellence: But the Scripture does not stop here; whatever it represents admirable in God it refers to man. If God be described as good, he is good to man; if powerful, if wise, if all-knowing, if every where present, he exerts all these attributes for the good of man. If he be

SERM. the Creator, man is his chief work, whom alone  
 XIX. he hath made in his own image. If he hath



created other things, for the use of man he created them, for *all things are put under his feet*. In fine, every thing in this book is referred to man; God himself, speaking to man, acknowledgeth himself to be his God. Is there any book like unto the Scriptures in this respect, which placeth the unspeakable Goodness of God, and his mercies towards man, in so clear a light, and impresseth it so deeply on the mind, in which man may learn to consider so attentively what and how great benefits he hath received from God, may learn to look upon all things which are within, without him, which are above, beneath, round about him, as so many gifts of the Divine Goodness? Who does not see the aim of all this? Is it not, that as many as are the benefits of God to us, recounted in Scripture, so many may be the cords of love by which our hearts should be drawn towards him? Is it not, that man, overwhelmed by the number and greatness of these mercies, should not know where to turn himself, what he should repay unto God; and, at length, finding in himself nothing else, he should acquiesce in glorifying a God so good, *in calling upon his holy name, in paying his vows, and offering sacrifices of thanksgiving to the Most Highest?*

Above all these benefits conferred upon man by God, most eminent is the work of the Redemption, and the spiritual blessings connected  
 with

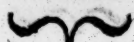


With it, such are our calling, conversion, justification, adoption, whatever, in short, relates to the reconciliation of sinners with God and to their final salvation. The Holy Scriptures principally regard this great work; this *Moses* and the Prophets promise; this the Gospel declares to be accomplished.

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Nothing is omitted which may contribute to display the greatness of this Mercy. Here you see a representation of the dreadful misery from which man was delivered: You behold the happy state in which he is placed by his Redeemer; the hope of which he becomes heir: You discover also the immense price at which this salvation is purchased: You behold the dignity of him who accomplished this work, the Son of God, God made manifest in the flesh. From whence you cannot but admire the unspeakable love of God to men, *who spared not his own Son, but gave him for us*. Now here the question is not, Is there any book which equals the Holy Writings in describing this work? All others are silent concerning it; These are things which it could not enter into the heart of man to conceive: The Scripture alone hath brought us these glad tidings. How great an inducement must this ineffable benefit be to our glorifying God? How powerful an incentive to piety? How strong a tie to bind us for ever to our God; *that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we should serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life; that, being bought with a price, we*

SERM. *should glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which*  
XIX. *are God's.*



But if man should continue insensible to all these arguments, and should not be induced to love God either by his perfections or the mercies received from him, the Scripture employs yet other motives by which he may be prevailed upon. He who cannot be persuaded by reason, may be won over by interest. In the same book, therefore, our duty of obedience to God is represented as useful to all things; it is *great gain, both the promises of this life and that which is to come.* We cannot imagine to ourselves any good thing which is not here promised to the truly religious: God declareth that he will be always favourable to them; He, who doth not forget nor forsake his own; who gives them every thing bountifully, and makes all which befalls them conduce to their advantage: And he farther assures us, that his mercy to them shall not be confined within the narrow bounds of this short life, but shall shine out more abundantly in another, which shall be for ever; and that the happiness of this new state may be perfect, the body shall be made to partake of it, for which end it shall be raised from the grave and re-united to the departed spirit. Now, what can the heart of man, insatiable as it is in its desires, wish for beyond this eternal possession of infinite good? Considered in this light, if reason cannot, shall not interest make men religious?

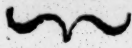
Doth



Doth the virtue of the *Gentiles* promise any thing equal to this? Those few amongst them who had expectations of a future life, either detract from its authority by admitting a mixture of ridiculous fables, or speak of it as a doubtful rumour, a pleasing dream, rather to be wished-for than firmly credited. "O glorious day, saith  
" a great person among them, when I shall go in-  
" to the divine assembly of Spirits, when I shall  
" depart from this scene of impurity and disorder!" Thus far like a Christian, but how different are the words which follow! "But if I  
" err in this, believing the souls of men to be  
" immortal, I err willingly; nor will I suffer this  
" pleasing mistake to be forced from me whilst I  
" live: And if, after death, I shall be deprived  
" of sense, as some petty philosophers imagine,  
" I do not fear that these philosophers shall then  
" ridicule my error." How much more clearly, more constantly, more assuredly, do the Apostles speak, not only of eternal life, but of the resurrection of the body also! This they affirm as most certain, as revealed by God, confirmed by many miracles, upon account of which they are prepared to renounce all good things here, and to suffer every imaginable evil.

Such powerful motives might influence a man even to a task harsh and disagreeable; but this is not the present case: Our duty of glorifying God thus reasonable, thus useful, is set forth to us, in the same book, as most pleasant, as an *easy yoke* and a *light burthen*; as *rest to the soul*,

SERM. *soul, as commandments not grievous*; nay, as the

XIX.  work of Angels, as the pleasure of the blessed in Heaven. And what indeed can be more pleasing, than to contemplate, to admire and celebrate the great perfection of God and his love to us; to walk with him, to converse with him in prayer, to rejoice in him, to trust in him, to throw all our cares upon him? What more delightful, than to live upon earth with God as a most affectionate Father, with men as brethren? What more desirable, than to preserve a perpetual government over our passions, to desire nothing but in conformity to the will of God, to regard prosperous and adverse events as alike tokens of the divine love, to keep in all things a good conscience, which is a continual feast? What a source of true pleasure must it be, to think often upon the glad tidings of our redemption in Christ Jesus, and our reconciliation with God, to perceive in one's self the fruits of the spirit, and enjoy *the peace of God which passeth all understanding*, to taste here upon earth heavenly joy; by these considerations to sweeten the bitterest events, and, in the end, full of these hopes, to meet our last hour with calmness and resignation?

This is the yoke which the Scripture puts upon the Sons of God: Who doth not acknowledge this to be lighter than the yoke of unrighteousness and the bonds of sin? For they who are enslaved to this latter, enjoy at best but vain and fleeting pleasures; disappointed in every

ry



ry thing they desire, for ever exposed to the remorse of conscience, unable to think on death but with horror, they have as many tormentors as unbridled appetites, so that they never know peace, but are tossed up and down by the passions which govern them, like *the troubled sea, which is never at rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*

Beside these general incitements, the same book furnishes particular arguments to every virtue. What stronger motives can be urged for contentment, than that wherein you are told, *that your heavenly Father, who arrayeth the lillies of the field, knoweth what things ye have need of?* What to charity, than when you are taught, *that we are all members of one body, to which our Lord is the head?* How effectually are we exhorted to forgive others, when we learn how many and heinous crimes God hath forgiven us? Ought we not to forgive our enemies, when we reflect that *he causeth his sun to rise upon the good and the evil, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust?* Who is not prompted to do offices of mercy, when he hears the Son of God declare, that what is done unto the least of his servants, *he will consider as done unto himself?* Who would not study to be meek and patient, when he looks upon Him who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he was evil intreated, threatened not, but committed his cause to him that judged righteously. Who would not be chaste and temperate, whose members are here called the members of Christ,

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Christ, and his body the temple of God, in which the Holy Spirit dwelleth? More instances of the same kind might be brought; for there is no virtue, no duty, belonging to any rank, age or condition of men, to which the Scripture does not incite by the most powerful motives; on the contrary, no vice or sin which it does not discourage or pluck out of the mind by the strongest arguments.

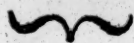
To these encouragements we owe the great virtues recorded in the holy writings. What induced *Abraham*, at the command of God, to leave his kinsfolks, parents and country, and wander from place to place among strangers and aliens? He hoped for a city having a foundation in the Heavens, of which God was the builder. What engaged *Moses* to leave the pomp and pleasure of *Pharaoh's* court, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin? He had respect unto the recompence of the reward. These were the motives which enabled the Apostles, denying and quitting all things, to imitate their Master, to take up his cross, and drink of the bitter cup which he had drank of. These have brought so many hardened sinners to repentance, inspired so many confessors with constancy, supported so many martyrs in tortures and death, and still, in these degenerate days, when the lives of Christians are, for the most part, so unworthy of the faith they profess, the influence  
of



of them is beheld, in many instances, of exalted virtue. SERM.  
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We have now seen that the Scriptures lay down the strongest possible motives to the practice of virtue, proving that reason, pleasure and interest, the three great ends and springs of all our actions, which separately can engage us in the most difficult undertakings, do all concur here in the strongest degree. From whence it is manifest, that whoever professes to believe the Christian religion, cannot live viciously without acknowledging himself to be guilty of the most perverse, unjustifiable folly. It remains, to complete our argument, that we should enquire what kind of motives the wise *Gentiles* of old, before the knowledge of this revelation, employed to recommend the practice of virtue: And these, upon examination, we shall find to be such, as no wise man could think sufficient to the end proposed; nay, in some cases, one could not be virtuous, merely upon their account, without folly. A few observations will make this clear.

In the *first* place, it is to be observed, that the *Gentile* philosophers, in exhorting men to the practice of virtue, do, for the most part, omit the chief and, indeed, only incentive to it, God and Religion. For, in the writings of their great men concerning virtue, offices, and the chief good, we scarce find mention made of God and religion, as if virtue could be established without regarding them. And truly it is not wonderful,

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wonderful, that they drew no arguments to this purpose from their religion, which abounded with impious rites, designed to appease gods more wicked than their worshippers, and therefore likely to corrupt instead of reforming mankind.

Some, indeed, among them, of elevated minds and great abilities, had right sentiments of the Divine Majesty, and saw the obligation upon them to worship and obey the Deity. However, they never pursued these notions with the steadiness, nor laid down the connection between religion and moral virtue, with the clearness necessary to have considerable influence upon the minds of men. Nor did they at all deduce human duties from their true source, obedience to the command of God. They resembled men walking, by a faint light, amidst perplexed intricate roads; the most quick-sighted caught but a glimmering ray, by which they discovered the right path; but they soon afterwards either lost it themselves, or did not see clearly enough to prevail on others to follow them. Accordingly, we find the most celebrated among them, in many parts of their writings, professing themselves, and requiring others to believe, in the superstitious rites of their respective countries.

Since then the *Gentiles* neither did, nor could, use their religion as the chief incentive to virtue, the only motives remaining were glory, and the pleasure arising from a consciousness of virtue; for, as to bodily pleasure, it is allowed, that  
virtue



virtue often consists in the neglect and contempt of it.

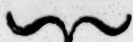
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The first of these, Glory, was indeed the great prize which they proposed to themselves in their actions; and yet consider how little solidity there is in it. How doth the man, who is virtuous upon this principle, act? He purchases the opinions of others, the opinions of an inconstant multitude, opinions often false and vain, almost always rash and changeable, which, during his life, are frequently unjust and malicious; if after death they should be favourable, they cannot afford him delight; these opinions, this idle breath of popular rumour, he purchases at what price? At the expence of toil, of watchings, of self-denial, of pain, of dangers, of sickness, of death. What can one pronounce of this conduct, but that it is vain and imprudent? Our Lord, speaking of those who seek the applause of men, saith of them, that *they have their reward*; they have done every thing that they may be seen and commended; behold they have attained their end, they have been seen and commended; let them depart therefore, and bear away their recompence; let them enjoy the smock they have grasped at; but, thus masters of their wish, let them leave the solid reward of piety to others.

As to the pleasure arising from a consciousness of virtue, this we acknowledge to be well-founded, if this consciousness be considered as the judgment of our own minds, comparing our actions

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actions with the law of God, approving them as agreeable to that law, and from thence assuring us of the divine favour : But, if laying aside all thought of God, it be considered only as a favourable judgment which we pass upon ourselves as a self-complacency and approbation of our own perfections, the pleasure arising from it is yet more vain than that which springs from the opinions of others. For he who declares himself a despiser of glory, as being satisfied with a consciousness of his own virtue, distinct from all consideration of a Deity, seems to reason with himself in this manner : “ Shall I depend “ precariously upon the judgments of others ? “ Shall I beg the praises of men far inferior to “ me ? Certainly this condescension is unworthy “ of me : My own judgment is sufficient ; I am “ best acquainted with my own worth, and will “ acquiesce in this sweet self-approbation.” I am mistaken, if persons who think in this manner be wiser than these others, the slaves of public fame : At least, it must be allowed, that the hard and steep path of virtue is not the only one which leads to this pleasure, it is oftener and more easily found in the broad and flowery road of vice and folly.

Thus neither glory nor a consciousness of having done well, can afford sufficient motives to virtue ; and the wiser sort among the *Gentiles* were so sensible of this, that they had recourse to another, affirming that we ought not to seek for any reward of virtue, that virtue is its own reward,



ward, of itself infinitely desirable: But however magnificently they may have talked, whatever pomp and splendor may appear in their sentiments, certain it is, that their high and abstracted notions never had any influence upon the bulk of mankind, nor induced them to the practice of virtue: And their wise man, whom they described as possessed of such generous disinterested virtue, is but an imaginary character, to be found only in their writings.

But suppose that we met with such a person, a lover of virtue for the sake of virtue alone; should we think him a truly wise person? Imagine one running up and down incessantly with the utmost speed and eagerness, who, upon your asking what might be the cause or intent of all that hurry, should answer, that he ran about merely for the sake of running, would you judge him to be in his right understanding? And is not the case of our supposed wise man, who pursues virtue for itself, much the same? He toils, he labours, he watches, he is perpetually in action, undergoes all dangers, resigns all advantages, life itself; for what end? Who requires these things from him? Why, these, saith he, are acts of virtue, virtue consisteth in these. Well, but why does he condemn himself to such a laborious virtue? The same cause returns; he undergoes all for the sake of virtue, that is, he runs for the sake of running, he toils for the sake of toil: In short, he performs all these difficult works of virtue, for no other reason, but that

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he may perform them : For if we leave out all thought of God our Creator and Lawgiver, this is a true state of the case, the vanity and folly of which proceeding do not, I think, need farther proof.

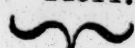
Thus we have seen the truth of what was laid down to be proved, the excellency of the Holy Scriptures, as they alone propose to mankind true and effectual motives to virtue. From what has been observed, it is obvious to reason with ourselves in the following manner.

Whence is it that I seek, in vain, for effectual motives to my duty, in the writings of the wisest men? Why are all which they propose insufficient and vain? How comes it to pass, that I find, in the Holy writings, what I search for to no purpose, in all others? Why is it, that in them I meet with the strongest motives, not only to the worship of God, but to all other virtues, the connection of which with the worship of God, and with each other, I behold discovered and explained in this book alone? How is it, that all parts of this extraordinary book conspire so powerfully to raise men above the objects about them, to fix their attention, their love, their hopes, their fears, upon God? Did the persons who are said to have been authors of this book write from mere human invention? Who, therefore, were those persons, so zealous for the honour of God, who made it their sole study to convert mankind to him, and employed so many and strong instruments to this end? Who were



were those persons, endowed with such distinguished wisdom, who so far excelled all the philosophers of the *Gentiles*, who have amassed together, in this one book, every thing useful to this purpose; nay, who have brought to light such motives to virtue, as we cannot imagine how they entered into the mind of man; such as *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.*

What judgment do you form of these persons? Perhaps they were men of great talents and extensive learning. Quite otherwise: They were, for the most part, ignorant and illiterate, certain *Jewish* shepherds, artificers and fishermen. These are the men whose writings you so justly admire. You are astonished, and cry out, "whence  
" this knowledge in persons of such low condition?" Suspend your wonder; consult them; they themselves account for it: They declare that they neither did, nor could, find out these things, but that God, by his Spirit, revealed the whole to them. This as a fact, an unquestionable truth, they constantly affirm. Wherefore, they press upon us, with the greatest earnestness, these motives as divine. By these alone they endeavour to move, to raise, to inflame the minds of their readers with the love of God and virtue, showing their own minds to have been first enflamed by them; for we see all the motives before-mentioned have wrought their effect in them, as their writings every where breathe a spirit of purest piety, of most

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ardent devotion, a mind weaned from the world, panting for a better state, filled with God, and ready to do or suffer any thing for him. Consider this, and acknowledge herein the finger of God. Let us therefore, my brethren, make these holy oracles our study: *Search the Scriptures ; let your delight be in the law of the Lord, and meditate therein day and night ; for the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple ; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart : True and righteous are they all together, more to be desired than fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

SERMON



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# S E R M O N    X X.

Charity illustrated and recommended  
from the Life of *Moses*,

Preached in St. Peter's, Dublin;  
Nov. 25, 1753.

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EXODUS ii. 6.

*And when she had opened the ark, she saw the child,  
and behold the babe wept; and she had compassion  
on him.*

**T**HE whole life of *Moses*, concerning whom these words were written, from the time of his being shewn to *Israel*, was a succession of wonders. Sent forth from God to deliver his people, we behold him attesting his divine mission by a great variety of supernatural works. He stretches out his hand, the sea divides, and the children of *Israel* pass through the waves as on firm land: He smites the rock, immediately streams of water issue out in the dry wilderness. He commands, earth opens her mouth and swallows up his re-

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SERM. bellious adversaries. Behold he is taken up in  
 XX. the midst of earthquakes, and thunders, and  
 ~~~~~ lightnings, to converse, face to face, with Al-  
 mighty God.

Suitable to this life of miracles were also the beginning of it, recorded in the chapter of which my text is a part. The *Egyptians*, jealous of the numbers and strength of the *Hebrews*, had doomed every male child, which should be born among them, to be thrown into the river. The mother of *Moses* having, in order to preserve him from this terrible sentence, concealed him three months, and, finding it impossible to conceal him longer, laid him in an ark made of rushes, on the brink of the river, and there abandoned him to that fate, which seemed unavoidable. In this nice conjuncture, the daughter of *Pharaoh* King of *Egypt*, coming to bathe herself, descries the ark, orders her attendants to bring it; *and having opened the ark, she saw the child, and behold the babe wept; and she had compassion on him.* Immediately, she commands him to be taken up, commits him to his own mother (though unknowingly) to be nursed by her, educates him afterwards in her father's court, *and he became her son.*

From this affecting passage of sacred history, it is natural, at first sight, to observe and admire the secret workings of Providence; by what an extraordinary concurrence of accidents it prepared the way for the great events which were to follow.

Ye

Ye cannot but observe also, that this Providence bringeth forth, even from the devices of cruelty, means to defeat that very cruelty. Thus *Moses*, condemned to death in his infancy by the barbarous policy of the *Egyptians*, became, through that very policy, qualified to defeat them, and delivered his enslaved countrymen, being instructed in all the *wisdom of the Egyptians*, thus bred up in arts proper to form a governor and lawgiver.

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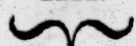
Many such reflections we might draw from this event, useful and pleasing to the mind: But I hasten to others of more general advantage, which relate to us all, to the conduct of our lives. Viewed in this light, the words point out to our consideration three particulars: The cause which moved *Pharaoh's* daughter to this action, for *she had compassion on him*; the object of this compassion, the child *Moses*; and the effect of it, *he became her son*, he was preserved and educated.

First; Concerning the cause, *Compassion*, the chief questions that occur are these: What is its nature, end, use? What the duty arising from it? What is *Compassion*?

If ye would have a true answer to this question, look for it in your own hearts. When a person in distress is presented to your eyes, when the voice of extreme misery pierceth your ears, examine what passeth within; are ye not instantly filled with concern? Do ye not become

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anxious, uneasy, eager to relieve, and if you cannot, to fly from the sufferer? There is a contagion in grief, that seizeth on the stander-by; our hearts are tuned, as it were by nature, to each other; if the heavy hand of affliction strike one, the others tremble.

Even the brute creation raise pity in us, and wherever there are life and sense, we are affected by any strong expression of want or torture. Neither is the presence of the object necessary; this passion is a kind of magic which bears us back into antiquity, and hurrieth us to remote parts of the earth; we pity the savage and infidel groaning under tyranny; we adopt the woes of afflicted virtue, and share in the calamities of good men who have long since ceased to be; nay, it transporteth us into the vast imaginary regions of fiction; we grieve for sorrows which we know were never felt, and are affected by a well-invented fable, nearly as much as by the most undoubted history.

Now, what judgment shall we form of a principle so powerful? Is it self-love? Do we pity another merely because we reflect that we may ourselves fall into the same distresses? It cannot be: For children, who cannot make such reflections, do yet pity; neither in the act of pitying are we conscious of our making such comparison; on the contrary, we are touched, we are melted at once, we feel the anguish, we breathe the sighs of the wretched, self vanishes for some
 instants,

instants, and the whole soul is possessed by concern for another.

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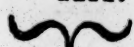
What then? Is this compassion mere prejudice and custom? Neither can that be, for it is found in all; there are seasons when the hardest tempers relent. Nor yet is it weakness of mind; for it is strong in the bravest and firmest. Neither is it an imperfection unworthy of the virtuous man; for humanity ever dwells with virtue; nay, the ever-blessed Jesus had compassion: *Jesus wept.*

May we not, therefore, must we not, pronounce it to be the voice of nature, the voice of God within us, exhorting us to good and generous actions?

Every man hath within him a strong principle of self-love, a firm attachment to his own happiness: But lest each, by being fixed to one private view, should become detached from all other, and the system of mankind be disjoined by that means and disunited, this principle of compassion was added by the great Creator, affording a common link to bind the whole together. However different in language, manners, outward feature, every human creature in misery, it must be acknowledged, maketh us, in some degree, miserable.

Natural passions may be thus distinguished from those which are abuses of the natural; the natural, when gratified, produce a lasting satisfaction; the others a transient one, quickly followed by disgust: Thus revenge, at the instant

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stant of execution, may please ; but in cool, sober thought raiseth abhorrence and remorse ; whereas compassion continueth to please upon reflection ; we think the better of ourselves for having it ; it becomes the source of a pure, permanent, exquisite delight. This is a proof of its being natural, and, at the same time, a motive to indulge it, at once an argument and reward.

This being so, compassion, thus infused into us by the God of nature, must tend to useful purposes ; nor is it hard to discover these. Look round amongst mankind ; to what a multitude of ill accidents are we all exposed ? We are encompassed by pains and sorrow ; diseases lie in ambush for us every where, at home and abroad, in our business and recreations, in our meats and drinks, so that even the supports of life become, not seldom, instruments of death. Into what grievous excesses do our own passions transport us ? Above all, innumerable are the evils we are plunged into from the bad passions of others, their avarice, ambition and envy. Beheld in this point of view, what a scene of wretchedness, what a chaos doth human life appear ! But suppose compassion once established, like new-created light, she brings in order and harmony, she soothes the pain of sickness, she pours balm into the wounds of despair, she raiseth up the head of pining want, and wipeth away the tears of sorrow.

God

God hath, for wise ends, judged a subordina-
tion of conditions to be fit ; society could not
be maintained without this inequality, which
our own vices have indeed too much increased.
some, therefore, must be high, some low, some
want, others abound : But that even the lowest
conditions might be tolerable, it hath pleased
our bountiful Creator, to plant in our nature
this affection of compassion, which should make
the affluence of one a supply to the indigence of
another. It is, as it were, a store laid up in the
breasts of all by the hand of Providence, to be
opened at the call of distress. Thus would life,
even in this imperfect state, be rendered agree-
able ; want performing works necessary to the
ease of plenty, plenty supplying the necessities of
want, a circulation of good offices would be there-
by kept up, and every condition be made com-
fortable, if we did not stop, and, as it were, freeze
up by cold, selfish passions, these sources of ten-
derness and pity, which should overflow in
streams of bounty and kindness, and cherish all
around them.

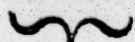
“ But would not reason alone have been suf-
ficient to this end ? ”

By no means. Reason would indeed teach
that we ought to assist each other, because it is
fit and right so to do ; it is besides our interest,
for thus we should be entitled to claim, in our
turn, the relief we bestowed : But this, it is clear,
could suffice only upon supposition, that all men
are governed by reason ; whereas, in truth, the
greater

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greater number are guided by sense, appetite or habit : The still small voice of reason is not heard amid the hurry of business and the storm of passion. Providence, therefore, hath planted in our breasts compassion, which should make itself attended to by the pain it produceth. It is an advocate within us, pleading the cause of the unhappy, which all men will hear, because all men feel ; for it is not confined to the reasonable and virtuous, which is a signal use of it, that being an universal principle, and acting mechanically, it makes the evil instruments of advantage to us : The unthinking, the idle, the vicious, by these means, without designing, answer one of the ends of virtue ; for this principle is seldom wholly extinguished ; it lies often concealed and covered, as it were, under the embers of vice, yet there remain some sparks which the sighs of distress often blow up into a genial reviving flame.

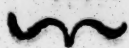
Thus we have seen what is compassion, its end, its usefulness. The next question was, What duty ariseth from it ? To which the answer is plain, to do works of mercy and kindness ; for the affection being natural, the actions flowing from it are so ; if natural, reasonable ; if reasonable, the duty of rational creatures. This appears farther from the judgment of our own minds concerning these works. Have ye done a generous humane act ? Ye reflect upon it with self-approbation ; ye are elevated with a consciousness of merit. Hath another person
done

done such action? Ye cannot but esteem and honour him. What need of arguments where our own hearts bear witness to the excellence of actions? Let any man try whether he can bring himself to love cruelty, perfidiousness, inhumanity, he will find it impossible: Neither can he hate goodness and charity; they are as distinct as light and darkness; men, by false reasonings, may confound, they cannot change their nature; and whatever they may say, their outward senses will bear testimony to the one, and the sentiments of their minds to the other.

Besides these clear reasonings, these strong testimonies of our conscience, we have also another obligation, the positive command of God, in his revealed will, expressly enjoining us to be *tender-hearted and charitable one to another. Is not this the fast I have chosen, saith the Lord by his Prophet, to deal thy bread to the hungry, when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh. I was eyes to the blind, saith Job, and feet was I to the lame; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. Be as a father unto the fatherless, saith the wise man. He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack. Our Lord commandeth us, Be ye merciful as your Father in Heaven is merciful. And again, he saith, Blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy. Indeed the whole Gospel aboundeth with precepts to this purpose. Love and charity are the virtues every where recommended by Jesus Christ,*

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Christ, and made the distinguishing marks of his disciples. Admirable situation! where the religion of a people conspires with their interest, and makes that their duty which is necessary to their happiness.

Religion, it is true, hath not the influence it ought to have, yet are the good effects of Christianity seen in the manners of its professors, which are much more gentle and humane than those of others. The Heathens had somewhat fierce and savage even in their virtues; it is the glory of the Christian doctrine, that it carries the mild instincts of our nature to their greatest height. It may be said to have brought charity into the world with it, and that which was before a degree of perfection aimed at by few, it rendereth the duty of all.

Thus is our duty manifest. We have the positive authority of our Creator enforcing the dictates of our own hearts and consciences; and whether we read the will of God as written in our hearts or in his Gospel, we are alike led to this great duty of good-will and charity.

It is to be remarked, however, that charitable actions, so far as they proceed from compassion alone, are not virtues. The indulging a natural passion, which is mere temper, is not itself an excellence: To make it such the indulgence must be from choice; reason must prescribe the occasion, the degree, the effects of it; we must exert it in opposition to contrary inclinations, if right, we must restrain it where improper

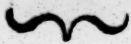
per or excessive. We should therefore settle in our minds deliberate, steady habits of well-doing, founded in a sense of our duty, in a veneration of the laws of God, and farther regulated by prudence; for, as the principle itself, so should the application be good, and those wants first relieved which are most urgent, most undeserved in the sufferer, and most for the advantage of the public to have relieved.

It is not to my present purpose to recount the several offices of charity conspicuous amongst us: Here we behold her raising mansions for the reception of the diseased, the maimed and wounded; there restoring the lost beam of reason to the lunatick mind.

In one place bringing into the world infants, many of whom distress must have extinguished, perhaps with their wretched parents, on their entrance into life. Again, those whom Providence hath visited with incurable diseases, withdrawing from the eye of the public, with pious care soothing their last groans and softening the terrors of approaching death. Such are the public channels in which her bounty rolls; and who can number her private benefactions, thousands of streams which, flowing silent and unseen, diffuse health and gladness through the land? Need I mention wretches who languish in the depth and darkness of dungeons, restored by her bounty to liberty and light? Need I mention old age, worn out by years and infirmities, supported;
families,

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families, reduced by misfortunes or deaths, maintained by her unasked liberality, their wants relieved while their blushes are spared? All these offices of charity are undoubtedly excellent, and each may, from its circumstances, be the best. But I shall now confine myself to that branch of this virtue more peculiarly set forth in the text.

We have discoursed concerning the cause which moved the daughter of *Pharaoh* to the good action there recorded, *Compassion*; we are, *Secondly*, to consider the object of this compassion, the child *Moses*; under which example is more particularly recommended to us *Humanity* towards *Children*.

Holy Scripture affordeth us a still higher authority and greater pattern of this tenderness towards children, that of our blessed Lord himself. *And they brought unto him young children, saith the Evangelist, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.*

Children are indeed most proper objects of compassion, both as they are *innocent* and as they are *helpless*. Guilt ever diminishes or takes away pity, because, in that case, reason approveth

eth the sufferings and forbiddeth to pity the sufferer. But innocence oppressed, innocence unfortunate, hath the justest title to commiseration; we then give way to the whole tenderness of our nature; we are uneasy, impatient to bring relief to it; and, in so doing, perceive a pleasure which words cannot express, a heart-felt satisfaction which experience alone can give a right notion of.

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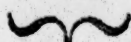
Now infancy hath this quality in the highest degree. It hath no guilt to suffer for, no follies to repent of, no vices to atone; not subject to law, it cannot be to punishment; its evils are therefore unmerited, and it is liable to many, from the circumstances in which it is brought into the world, from weakness of constitution, from the poverty, profligacy, or loss of parents.

To its innocence add its helpless state. It cannot supply its own necessities, cannot foresee dangers, cannot prepare against or repel them. It is thrown into life like a mariner shipwrecked on a foreign coast, without materials, knowledge, or power to support itself. The young of other kinds bring into the world, or soon acquire, an ability to support themselves; infants are under a necessity of depending long upon the care of others. They have no defence, no weapons, no instruments to make use of in providing for themselves, but such as the infant *Moses*, in the text, employed, tears and cries,

Z

feeble,

SERM. feeble, yet prevailing advocates, which no heart,
 XX. but one destitute of all humanity, can resist.

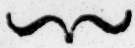


And here naturally follows the *third* particular, pointed out in the text, What was the effect of this Compassion to the child *Moses*? The answer points out also our duty; he was preserved, brought up, instructed. Hence charity to childhood best sheweth itself, by giving it a right and virtuous education. For mankind, though fitted and designed for such perfection, to be lords of this lower world, are, however, so framed, as, without care, to become the meanest of its inhabitants. Brutes have instinct for their guide; reason, our only guide, if left uncultivated, is lost: Hence man, uneducated, is in a worse condition than brutes, he hath neither instinct nor reason. Accordingly we find some few instances of persons who have been preserved in deserts, entirely untaught, from infancy to manhood, and have proved as wild and savage as the beasts with whom they were bred.

Thus reason, that ray of the Divinity which encompasses the earth, which measures the heavens and wanders into Eternity, will lie buried in obscurity, if not unfolded and cherished by good arts. It is a small spark soon extinguished, but, by proper fuel and gentle motion, raised into a glorious light. Education is therefore most necessary to all young minds: Youth is the new and fresh spring of life, the time in which we are to sow those good seeds that shall furnish the autumn of age with a plentiful harvest.

Many

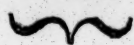
Many of the evils with which life is over-run, SERM.
proceed from a neglect of this happy season. XX.

The mind is a soil that will not lie fallow; if good grain be not planted in it, tares will spring up. 

Instances hereof are too frequent in every condition, especially in those of lower ranks. Many of their vices spring from the want of a good education, an advantage which their poverty often deprives them of. What examples do we see among them of corrupted morals! What gross ignorance! What savage manners! Where is the street in which the ear is not wounded by sounds of impurity, profaneness, or even blasphemy? Vice, too prevalent in every station, appeareth here in its most deformed shape, joined with laziness, with poverty, with sickness, filling our prisons with criminals, our streets and highways with loathsome and melancholy objects, the burthen and reproach of a people.

And how can these evils be so effectually prevented, as by forming the first years to habits of industry and virtue? Do but make a good education universal, most of the miseries of life vanish, riches become the source of general happiness by justice and liberality, poverty an instrument of that happiness by labour and industry. So that it is the first and most important duty of parents, in all ranks and stations, to train up their children in the right way; and where parents are disabled from this good office, that

SERM. care falls upon others, and the contributing to
XX. it is surely great merit.



Neither imagine, that the meanness of their condition makes it of no consequence to society how such persons are brought up. So closely is the happiness of all ranks connected, that the rich depend upon the poor, nearly as much as the poor depend on the rich.

Suppose there were to be found none but unskilful artificers, fraudulent dealers, faithless servants, how could the wealthiest enjoy their affluence? They must starve amid abundance. For we must all depend, for the necessities of life, on the industry and fidelity of the lower sort, which cannot be so well secured as by a care of their early years; and this care must be supplied, in a great measure, by the bounty of the pious and humane.

This kind of charity comprehends, in itself, almost all the good offices of charity. By it the naked are cloathed, the hungry fed, the destitute befriended, the feeble are supported, the ignorant instructed, principles of religion and probity are implanted in young minds, which otherwise would have been left exposed to all the temptations of want and ignorance.

Thus, by a double benefit to society, they are rendered useful members who would have been hurtful. In which last respect, this seems to excel every other sort of charity, as they tend only to redress evil, this to prevent its very being.

The

The present occasion will justify my enlarging on this subject, however clear and of acknowledged truth. Ye are now called upon to exercise this excellent part of charity, to contribute toward the bringing up poor children in the fear of God, in the learning some trade or calling, by which they may obtain an honest livelihood, and become useful to society. May we not justly look upon those children now before us, exposed, as they are, to the evils of poverty, the temptations of ignorance and sloth, as so many infants exposed, like him in the text, on the brink of the river, to the greatest of dangers? We are invited, like the Princess in the history, to take them up, to have them educated and instructed; and although there be not any highly favoured servant of God, any *Moses* among them, yet have they all immortal souls, and the preservation of these must be valuable in the sight of God and good angels.

The benefit of such foundations as these cannot be disputed. Here ye know, before-hand, the goodness of the end which your bounty shall promote, and may be assured of the prudent application of it; whereas, that which is bestowed on common vagrants is as likely to do harm as good.

Besides, if the young persons supported here were to be instructed only in mere points of speculative knowledge, the public would suffer, by losing those hands which might be better employed in manual labour. If, on the other side,

SERM. they were to be bred up in industry alone, without
 XX. regard to their morals, they might become
 skillful but dishonest workmen, and, in this way
 also, the public would be injured. But where
 both ends are joined, as in this institution,
 where the children are to be trained up in both
 religion and industry, the charity is complete
 and unexceptionable, advantageous to individuals
 and to society.

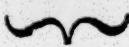
And need I add any thing to induce you to contribute to a design so pious and useful? Do not your own hearts suggest to you stronger arguments than words can express?

I might, indeed, have recourse to the arts of eloquence; the occasion would bear me out in it. I might seek to excite your compassion, by painting, in lively colours, the wants you are exhorted to remove, the evils you are entreated to prevent, such as poverty, nakedness, sloth, diseases, shame, untimely death.

Can any thing be more proper, more worthy of men and Christians, than by a small bounty, which cannot sensibly diminish your possessions, to preserve the innocence, and comfort the souls and bodies of young creatures, who, though deserted by fortune, are fellow-heirs with you of the same hope, and partakers of the same nature?

The words of the text suggest a peculiar remark, which allow me just to mention.

The good action there recorded, is the action of a woman; the example regardeth us all, we
 should

should all imitate this pattern of mercy; ye, SERM.
 more especially, who are of the same sex; na- XX.
 ture hath framed your hearts full of mildness 
 and compassion for wise purposes; that ye might
 sooth the anxieties of life by domestic tenderness,
 that ye might rear up with unwearied affection
 infancy surrounded by infirmities. O suffer not
 wicked fashion, perverse affectation, or selfish
 passions, to efface these kind impressions of na-
 ture! Imitate the Princess in the text; take up
 these young desolate orphans, support, instruct,
 educate them; so may Providence repay your
 care with every domestic bliss, preserving, pro-
 tecting, blessing those of like age, the dear ob-
 jects of maternal love.

Wherefore, my brethren, let all of every con-
 dition and sex, according to their abilities, lay
 hold on the present opportunity of doing good.
 Harden not your hearts, shut not your hands,
 rescue from danger, raise from want, put into
 the paths of diligence and virtue, *These*, whom
 the voice of nature, of reason, of Providence,
 recommend to your protection: Thus shall ye
 bring satisfaction to your own minds, benefit to
 the public, draw down a blessing upon your-
 selves and families here, and deserve a reward
 hereafter from the Almighty, who preferreth
mercy before sacrifice, and loveth the chearful giver.

Which, that we may obtain, God, of his
 infinite Mercy, grant, through the merits and
 mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord.

O R A T I O

In Funere Reverendi Viri

R—B—, S. T. P.

Habita Die quarto Octobris,
Anno 1758.

IN hoc pio, sed tristi munere obeundo, nobis, Academici, rectè reputantibus, haud parùm utilitatis occurrit; id enim primum commodi afferunt mortalitatis exempla, quod res humanæ quàm fluxæ sint, quàm caducæ demonstrent, hinc animos ad diuturniora bona, eorumque naturâ immortali digna prosequenda, suscitent, attollant; deinde, cum mors curriculum vitæ claudens hominem non personatum, nudum ac sincerum exhibeat, præcepta saluberrima ex alienâ vitâ transferre docet, ad instituentiam propriam.

Utrumque hunc usum præsens occasio præstat; opes nempe longâ prudentiâ partas, momento

O R A T I O.

momento temporis, dominum mutantem ostendit: nec uberiora moribus formandis exempla usquam haurire fas est, quam ex vitâ, in luce oculisque hominum, ad seram senectutem productâ.

Hunc in finem, apud *Ægyptios*, sapientissimam gentem, invaluit consuetudo celebris, defunctorum vitas, coram Judicibus selectis, adhibitis etiam testibus, solenniter perscrutandi, ut pro meritis illorum corpora, vel inter improbos ablegentur, vel cum piis honorificè requiescant.

Horum imitari avens justitiam saltem & æquitatem, non huic defuncto laudes fictas aut inconsultas fufurus huc temerè accedo, sed vera & perspecta, ex ipsius vitâ factisque deprompta locuturus, haud mortui magis famæ consulens, quam viventium utilitati.

Hic Præpositus noster, in *Angliâ* natus, infans in hanc insulam advectus est, et primis literarum elementis imbutus, mox hujus Collegii alumnus, juvenis adhuc, incidebat in procellosa tempora. Rex quippe infelix, Pontificiorum erroribus fasciatus, jura regni, religionem, libertatem everfurus, mortales quosdam eâdem superstitione inquinatus, ad hujus Collegii regimen ad-

mitti

mitti mandaverat, recusârunt nostri, fortissimi viri; instat tyrannus, pernegant, adhibetur vis, in exilium eunt, pecuniam, quæ modicè suppetebat inter pauperiores distribuunt, venditis etiam vasculis argenteis, illustres animæ! Non *Romæ* non *Britanniæ* magnanimitate minores, quàmvis, pro pudor! ingrato seculo parùm cognitæ. Adolescens noster in *Angliâ* extorris & egenus, inter cives ignotos quanquam humanissimos, non misericordiam imploravit, inertis & inutilis otio, sed victum laboriosum meritis comparavit, juventuti erudiendæ operam strenuè navans.

Pacato demum regno, redux, in focium hujus Collegii eligitur, triennio elapso, in seniorum ordinem cooptatur; quorum unus, annos ultra viginti numeravit, longo nimirum hoc tyrocinio, ad gravius illud præpositi munus aptiùs meliùsque adimplendum institutus, sensim, et quasi manu ductus.

Hoc temporis intervallo, resurgens profligata factio gentes hæc multis tempestatibus agitabat; magna pars, illustrissimi liberatoris immemor, extorrem quendam et vagum principem spectabat, superstitionis & servitutis jugum sponte iterum subitura; latè in populos defluxit tabes, tu quoque,
non

non dissimulabo, Alma Mater, Academia, ex
 venenato hoc poculo tu nimis altè haufisti :
 Quinetiam, eò usque increverat partis furor,
 ut plenis in comitiis, ipso adnitente Vice-
 cancellario, seditiosi aliquod decretum con-
 dere molirentur, sed hic noster semper in-
 corruptus restitit, oppugnavit; superante
 tandem adverforum numero, auctoritatem
 interposuit; vetuit comitia, jussisque insequi
 se fociis recusantibus, denunciâtâ amotionis
 pœnâ, discessit, quo nobili facinore factio-
 nem perculit, stupefecit, prostravit, ipse,
 tunc temporis Vice-Præpositus delegatam
 duntaxat at precariam potestatem exercens.
 Nec dispar huic aut discolor reliqua vita,
 nam deinceps ad Præposituram evectus
 multum et diu cum eâdem peste confligit,
 unde simultates, odia, cuncta calumniæ te-
 la sustulit, contempsit, rumoribus spernen-
 dis validus. Hinc præsens nostra tranqui-
 litas et concordia, hinc libertatis error, hinc
 in Regem optimum intaminata pietas cunc-
 torum ordinum juvenum, virorum in pec-
 toribus altè pariter insidens; quibus hæc jure
 gloriatur Academia, quibus audeo dicere,
 distinguitur; horum bonorum, Academici,
 ecce fontem! Inerat enim illi viro, huic
 optimo Gubernatori, animus justî tenax,
 imper-

imperterritus, inconcussus, adeò ut juvenem quendam seditiosum et contumacem, debitâ coercuit pœnâ, nullâ intercessione victus, frustra deprecante ipso Prorege, mitis tamen fuit et mansuetus, ac resipiscentes condonare facilis, misericors quantum licuit justo. Nec, adversus potentiam firmus, periculis cessit, in vulgus temerarium & insolens, irritatè, fortiter, quondam juventute nostrâ vim vi jam repellente, indigno prælio, vidi illum mediæ se turbæ immiscentem, inerme corpus furentibus objicientem, interea vultu, oculis, voce impavidum et ferenum, summâ constantiâ et gravitate cohibentem, suos increpantem, monentem; contuentur adolescentes reverendum senem, adeunt, venerantur, excidêrunt simul arma manibus, animis iræ, æqualis judex, idem omnibus, tenues, egenos, haud minùs quàm nobiles et locupletes tuebatur, causas spectans, non personas. Societati sibi commissæ affiduâ curâ invigilabat, rarâ morum comitate, accedentibus horis fere omnibus, lites, querelas, consilia, monita, quicquid afferebatur, libens recepturus, ut in audiendo æquus, sic ubi res postularet, in exequendo impiger.

Plures

Plures homines summæ fidei, qui illo, integrâ jam ætate, familiariter usi sunt, sæpe audivimus multa et præclara narrantes, de hujus viri multiplici eruditione, cujus ipsi vidimus haud obscura vestigia, quatenus nempe licuit introspicere animum modestiâ circumseptum, et dissimulatorem opis propriæ, cui fidem quoque facit elapsi vix temporis recens memoria. Quantâ nimirum cum laude circumstantium, quid scirent egregii juvenes in oratoribus et poetis, in historiâ et temporum ratione, audivimus illum, extremâ licet in senectâ, peracutè examinantem; id enim attulit commodi perpetua et sancta temperantia, ut intellectum illæsum, facultates omnes, externos quinimo sensus vegetos et acutos ultra nonagesimum annum conservaret, quod et multum forsitan adjuvit mitis indoles, ab omni turbido affectu immunis.

In factis ejus dictisve ad fastum vel inanem pompam nihil inerat compositi; contrâ, toto vitæ cultu rectus fuit et integer, veritatis amans, fraudis inimicus, inter familiares hilaris, cum simplicitate urbanus, in negotiis perspicax, pauca loquens, ad rem, acris et limati vir judicii.

Dives

Dives, supra ordinis sui fortem, decessit, sed frugalitate dives, non avaritiâ, testantur hoc coloni ejus et inquilinæ, quibus semper clemens fuit ac indulgens, ut in exquirendâ pecuniâ minimè acris, ita ad remittendum, quod et ipsi possumus testari, inter primos facilis.

Verùm enimverò ad quales usus reservabat ille divitias hæc, quàm nobile, quàm splendidum, quàm illustre, grati animi in societatem, cui tam diu præfuit inde (circa septuaginta quinque millia librarum Collegio legavit) testimonium reliquit, quàm honorificum sibi, et reipublicæ utile futurum!

Neque hæc tam eximia dona, vel repentinus aliquis mentis impetus aut instinctus temerè effudit, nec mortis terror extorsit, sed pensitatum, diu, et deliberatum consilium ordinaverat. Cujus rei, nostrorum e numero adest (G— C—) testis luculentus, cui sexennio antea, morbo tunc decumbens, ipse propositum suum huic omnino conforme, disertis verbis declaravit, quod ille fide dignus author, recens ab eo digressus, mihi confestim renunciavit.

Nemo

Nemo, dixit sapiens, ante obitum fœlix, nemo equidem notus. Mors quippe unica consummat famam, eique sigillum opponit, et certè, Academici, illustris fuit hujus viri exitus, difficilibus, lentisque cruciatibus, dilata diu mors, vigente ad supremum usque spiritum intellectu, e firmo et constanti pectore vix gemitum expressit, incidebat fortè, nescio, quænam quæstio, relegitur testamentum. Meministis testes, quâ patientiâ auscultavit ille, singulos articulos notavit, confirmavit, accersivit e nobis quosdam, allocutus est, quàm graviter, quàm sapienter, quàm piè!

Hæret adhuc, diuque hærebit animo meo imago venerandi senis; video illum languentem, morbo oppressum, anhelantem, moribundum, innixum ægrè cubito, “*Con-*”
“*lite, inquit, mutuam inter vos concordiam,*”
“*inservite bono hujus societatis. Hanc, cre-*”
“*dite morituro, semper amavi, et vos ama-*”
“*bo, et amo, hos protege, mihi, Deus cle-*”
“*mentissime, da facilem transitum.*” Ibi deficit vox.

Ergo discedis, venerande parens, relinquis, deferres nos, nos interea, mortales tui exuvias, quod hîc solum possumus, debito
efferimus

efferimus honore, hoc sepulchro recondimus, laudentes et mœrentes.

Culpæ, quascunque effudit humana incuria, vel admisit error, vel si fortè intulit passio, jaceant tecum, hoc obrutæ tumulo, vivant, celebrentur virtutes, vivent certè magnifica charitatis tuæ pignora, splendida liberalitatis munera, vivent, fructusque dabunt uberrimos, doctrinam et virtutem honestis præmiis ornantia, faventia; non enim ingenia nobis; forsan stimulus, ardor, æmulatio defuerunt, hæc suppeditabunt.

Quare solennem hanc pompam clausuro mihi, liceat, fratres carissimi, vos adhortari pretiosa hæc dona maturo consilio disponere, collocare, et fide sanctâ administrare; denique nostrûm successorumque, nostrorum nomine, Numen Omnipotens humillimè obtestemur, cœlesti suo favore dirigere nos omnes tueri, illuminare, ut ad ejus gloriam, patriæque commodum, fœcundum hinc et perenne monumentum statuamus, artibus ita bonis pietate, ac literis, magis, indies, magisque inclarescat Academia.

F I N I S.



